



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Public Health Unit

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH- Linda Beers, MPH
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH PROMOTION &
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Summer Rabies Vaccine Bait Distribution Planned for Parts of Essex County, NY

Elizabethtown, NY. The Essex County Health Department (ECHD) is advising residents that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS) recently announced it will conduct a summer distribution of oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits in August 2026 across New York State. Rabies baits are used for field vaccination of skunks, raccoons, and foxes as part of wildlife control programs to help prevent rabies in local wild animals.

Key Points About the Operation

- **Timing:** Beginning on or after August 5, 2026, with exact dates varying by location and weather conditions.
- **Areas Covered:** Selected zones in New York State, including a northeastern portion of Essex County.
- **Purpose:** To maintain a protective barrier and prevent further spread of rabies.
- **Safety:** The vaccine inside each bait has been tested and is safe for wildlife. If found, baits should be left undisturbed whenever possible.

What To Do If You Find a Rabies Vaccine Bait

If a bait is discovered in your yard or on your property:

- Leave the bait where you found it whenever possible.
- If the bait is in an area where kids or pets are, use gloves or a plastic bag to pick it up and place it in a nearby wooded area.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling.

If a Pet Comes Into Contact with a Bait

- Eating the bait is **not harmful** to dogs or cats, though the fish meal coating may cause mild stomach upset in some pets.
- Do not attempt to retrieve a bait from a pet's mouth; you could get bitten.

If a Person Comes Into Contact with a Bait

- Brief contact with an intact bait is typically not harmful. Wash hands with soap and water.
- If the vaccine packet inside the bait is punctured and the liquid comes into contact with skin, wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water.
 - Avoid contact of the affected area with the mucous membranes (eyes, nose and mouth) and wash the affected area thoroughly with soap and water. Seek medical attention if needed.



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"Oral rabies vaccines for local wildlife is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of rabies and protect both people and pets," said Linda Beers, Director of Public Health for the Essex County Health Department. "Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms develop, but it is entirely preventable. We use a variety of prevention strategies, including free rabies vaccination clinics for dogs, cats, and ferrets, prompt investigation and follow-up when animal bites or exposures occur, and ongoing public education to help residents recognize risks and take appropriate precautions."

"We often get questions about the rabies bait drops, especially during our busiest season," said Jessica Darney Buehler, Deputy Director for ECHD. "When wildlife eat the bait, it helps protect them from rabies and strengthens overall protection in the region," she added.

Residents with questions about the bait distribution or concerns about possible exposure should contact the Essex County Health Department at 518-873-3500.

More information about rabies prevention can be viewed on the ECHD website at:
<https://health.essexcountyny.gov/communicable-disease-control/rabies-center/>

To learn more about rabies bait drops, go to: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/national-wildlife-programs/rabies>

To view the 2026 Rabies Clinic Schedule and register your pets, go to:
<https://health.essexcountyny.gov/rabies-clinics/>

The next opportunity to vaccinate your pets for free is Tuesday, August 18th from 6-7:30PM at the Schroon Lake Fire Department.

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