



## ***St. Lawrence County Public Health Department***

*80 State Highway 310, Suite 2 ■ Canton, New York 13617-1476*

*Phone: (315) 386-2325 ■ Fax: (315) 386-2203*

### **Press Release**

**Date: May 01, 2025**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Oral Rabies Vaccine Airdrop for Wildlife Populations Will Begin in Mid-May**

Canton, NY — St. Lawrence County Public Health Department (SLCPHD) was notified that the USDA Wildlife Services will be hosting an additional oral rabies vaccine (ORV) distribution, an essential initiative. ORV baits will be distributed by air throughout St. Lawrence County from May 14 through May 16. Bait distribution in New York is part of a nationwide, cooperative effort by the USDA to prevent the westward spread of rabies in the eastern US. This will distribute approximately 165,600 oral rabies vaccine baits in the St. Lawrence Valley Region.

The bait (pictured below), which resembles a fast-food ketchup package, includes a vaccine wrapped in a plastic packet that is dipped in fish oil and coated with fish-meal crumbles to attract target wildlife. The vaccine has been proven safe when given to more than 60 species of mammals and birds.

Residents who come in contact with wildlife vaccine packets can call the USDA at (315) 857 - 4311 with questions or concerns.

- Do NOT disturb vaccine packets. Most packets are eaten within four days; almost all baits will be gone within a week. If packets are not found and eaten, they will harmlessly dissolve, and the exposed vaccine will become inactivated. If you must move a vaccine packet, wear gloves or use a plastic bag or paper towel to pick it up. Place any damaged baits in the trash; throw intact baits into a wooded area or other raccoon/wildlife habitat.
- Residents should WASH HANDS IMMEDIATELY if they come into direct contact with the vaccine or packets, then call the SLCPHD at (315) 386 - 2325.
- Supervise children's outdoor activities during bait distribution and for one week afterward.
- Confine dogs and cats indoors and observe leash laws during the bait distribution interval and for one week afterward. This will increase the probability of wildlife vaccination and decrease the chance of pets finding the bait.
- Baits and vaccines are not harmful to domestic animals. However, an animal may vomit if it consumes several baits.
- Residents should not risk being bitten while trying to remove bait from your pet's mouth.



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Always notify your medical provider or SLCPHD if you are bitten by a pet or a wild animal. Additionally, keep your pets up to date on their rabies vaccination, and make sure your home is bat-proof.

Last year, SLCPHD vaccinated 2,172 pets thanks to the free clinics held in partnership with towns, villages, and community organizations. In 2024, the department addressed 375 reported dog and cat bites. 123 animals that were suspected of rabies were submitted by SLCPHD and the United States Department of Agriculture; only one bat tested positive for rabies, illustrating the effectiveness of the program's preventative measures.

We are pleased to announce a series of free rabies vaccination clinics. These clinics provide an opportunity for pet owners to ensure their furry companions are up-to-date on their rabies vaccinations, all at no cost. The clinic dates and locations are listed at <https://stlawco.gov/Departments/PublicHealth/RabiesControl>.

