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May 13, 2016: Preventing the Spread of Wildlife Rabies in Cape May County

Cape May Court House – In response to control animal rabies cases, Freeholder Kristine Gabor announced today that the Departments of Health and Mosquito Control will be working together to distribute over 34,400 vaccine-laden baits throughout the mainland communities of Cape May County. The majority of the baits will be distributed by helicopter and the remaining will be distributed by hand in raccoon habitats (such as storm drains) and other areas considered inaccessible to the by helicopter. If weather permits, the baits will be distributed starting the week of May 16th, 2016 and be completed within one to two weeks.

Health Officer Kevin Thomas informed residents that, “the bait will have a warning label and include a Cape May County Department of Health telephone number for inquiries and for people to call if contact with the bait occurs.” Additionally, signs will be posted on utility poles in mainland communities to alert residents that oral rabies vaccine bait has been distributed in their neighborhood.

This vaccination program will help to reduce the number of animals with rabies such as raccoons, result in fewer encounters between rabid wildlife, pets, and people,” said Thomas. The vaccine is not harmful to wild animals or pets. Although the exposure risk to humans is very slight, the following information is important:

- Be aware of what bait looks like.
- Encourage children to leave the baits alone.
- Keep dogs and cats inside or on leashes at least five days after your area has been baited.
- Do not attempt to take bait away from your pet; you may be bitten!
- Wash your hands or exposed skin thoroughly with soap and water if you touch the bait or the liquid vaccine inside the bait.



To ensure that animal rabies is controlled and that people and pets are protected, pet owners must do their part by vaccinating their dogs and cats against rabies. Additionally, people should not approach wild animals themselves - instead call the local animal control officer for assistance.

Rabies is a fatal disease in humans and any animal bite should be taken seriously. The rabies virus is shed in the saliva of animals that are infected with the virus. If you are bit by an animal, wash the wound, seek medical attention immediately, and call the Cape May County Department of Health and your municipal animal control agency. If you are exposed to a rabid or suspected rabid animal, you must receive rabies shots as soon as possible to prevent the disease. If your pet has contact with a wild animal, contact your veterinarian and the Department of Health right away.

If you have questions about the County's wild animal rabies vaccination program, call the Health Department at 465-1209. For more information on animal rabies, go to the Environmental Division at: <http://www.cmchealth.net> and to receive information on public health news and local events, "like" the Cape May County Department of Health on Facebook.

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