



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Taking Our Fight Against Rabies to New Heights: Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

PATTY RITCHIE August 23, 2016



Have you heard? Throughout our region, we're again taking the fight against rabies to new heights. Earlier this month, crews began conducting rabies "bait drops." This unique effort—which is conducted by Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences—utilizes low-flying planes to drop small packets containing a rabies vaccine, surrounded by a mixture of sugar, vegetable fat and other flavors, that are then consumed by animals, namely raccoons.

In recent years, I have been proud to lead the way to secure increased support that has helped expand the area where bait drops occur. Locally, this year, the drops are taking place in St. Lawrence, Lewis, and Jefferson Counties. It's important to note that if you come across one of the baits, to leave it alone. While they aren't dangerous to humans or pets, they might make you sick—so be sure to steer clear. If you do come in contact with bait, health officials recommend washing the exposed area with soap and water.

With over 2,300 cases of rabies reported across New York State since 2010—including more than 140 in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties—it's now more important than ever to protect our communities from this deadly disease. Securing funding for expanded bait drops is just part of the work I'm doing to safeguard the people and pets of our region. In fact, this year, I was proud to advocate for record support for rabies prevention and treatment efforts in the state budget, which is helping to protect our communities from this deadly disease. This funding will help make possible additional rabies vaccination clinics, which to-date, have safeguarded more than 2,000 pets from the disease. In addition, \$150,000 in funds will help pay for expensive post-exposure treatments in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties, which often must be covered by local taxpayers.

As summer continues, and animals stay increasingly active, it's important that we all take steps to protect ourselves, and our pets against rabies. From avoiding animals that are behaving strangely to making sure your pets are vaccinated, there are a number of ways you can take action and reduce the frequency of rabies in our region. For more information, visit my website at [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).