

Study to determine raccoon, skunk populations



Researchers will be setting traps in Saint John and Fredericton, as well as forested and agricultural areas in southwestern New Brunswick, to help determine the population density of raccoons and skunks.

The Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries, the Department of Energy and Resource Development, and the University of New Brunswick are partnering on the study from Aug. 21 to Sept. 1, 2017.

While the live traps will not injure dogs or cats, pet owners are encouraged not to let their animals roam off-leash to avoid setting off traps accidentally.

Traps baited with sardines will be used to capture raccoons and skunks. Target animals will be ear-tagged and released at the site of capture. Any domestic cats and dogs that are captured will be released without being tagged.

The information gathered will provide an estimate of raccoon and skunk populations in the target areas. This data will be used to support decisions on the number of vaccine baits that need to be placed in an area to help control rabies.

Traps will be placed and set on Monday, Aug. 21. They will be checked each weekday and closed on Friday, Aug. 25, to prevent animals from entering the traps on the weekend. The traps will be reset on Monday, Aug. 28, and checked again each weekday until they are removed on Friday, Sept. 1.

Since August 2015, the government has been distributing oral rabies vaccine baits throughout these areas to help prevent the spread of rabies. Raccoons, skunks and foxes are attracted to the baits and become vaccinated after consuming them.

The government recently distributed oral rabies vaccines by hand in a number of communities near the United States border. An aerial drop of baits will conclude this week.