

## THE RABIES IN LITHUANIAN WILDLIFE – TOUCHSTONES OF PREVENTION EFFICIENCY

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**Summary.** In the 2001-2006 period 2301 fox and 2604 raccoon dog rabies positive cases were registered in all the Lithuania districts with the average of 81.5 cases per district per year. In the wildlife range red fox and raccoon dog are the main rabies vectors in Lithuania: in 2001-2002 period there were 470 and in 2005-2006 period – 1217 positive rabies cases in fox population, but the rabies virus persistence in raccoon dog population were more revealed – 558 cases in 2001-2002 period and 1563 positive cases in 2005-2006 period. The rabies in this two species composes 86% of all the cases in wildlife and the 68-73% of all the rabies cases. The highest prevalence of fox and raccoon dog rabies cases was registered in the Vilnius and Utena counties (515 and 572 cases, respectively), the lowest - in the Telšiai county (47 and 42 cases, respectively). In 2006 the oral rabies vaccination (ORV) program begins in Lithuania. The spring vaccination was conducted in the 60% of the territory and 800,000 vaccine baits containing tetracycline marker were distributed. During the 2006 autumn ORV were used 1,300,000 vaccine baits in all the territory of Lithuania. Vaccines were distributed by aircraft in a “classical” linear vaccination protocol, 15-20 baits per 1 km. The tetracycline as a biomarker was investigated in Lithuanian National Veterinary Laboratory and 47.2% of tested samples were positive. These results demonstrate that half of the hunted wildlife animals had oral contacts with the marked rabies vaccine.

**Key words:** Lithuania, rabies, red fox, raccoon dog, vaccination.