

MNR drops rabies vaccines in Halton Hills's wooded areas

By LESLEY ALLEN

Special to The Independent/Free Press

In an effort to vaccinate foxes in and around the Georgetown area, the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) has been dropping rabies

vaccine by plane in wooded areas.

Dr. Ross Pezzack, veterinarian and owner of the Georgetown Animal Clinic said the rabies package which contains beef tallow with chicken and cod oil is not only attractive to foxes, but also to dogs.

Ballinafad resident, Bonnie Viens said her dog has brought home several of the packages which contain the rabies vaccine.

"It looks like a pat of butter you would get at a restaurant. It is a little square package, about one or

one and a half inches square. It has cardboard on the back with 'Rabies vaccine, do not eat' written on it."

Viens said the vaccine looks and feels like wax and is chicken flavoured and scented.

Viens said she called MNR after her dog brought several home and was told the vaccine posed no toxic threat to animals, only to humans if ingested.

Viens said the MNR were supposed to notify veterinarians the vaccine had been dropped, but when she spoke to her vet, Dr. Pezzack, he said he had not been notified.

Pezzack said he phoned MNR and was told the vaccine was of, "little benefit to dogs," and would, "cause no problem to domesticated animals."

Charles MacInnes, co-ordinator for Rabies Ontario, Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife Biologist said the rabies vaccine is not toxic to dogs and cats who may eat it, "but there is always the possibility someone could react to it."

MacInnes said if a dog or cat does eat the modified live virus vaccine, they might be vaccinated, but MNR would not issue a rabies vaccination certificate.

Once dropped, MacInnes said the lifespan of the rabies vaccine is only about five to seven weeks, since in normal housing conditions, the vaccine must be kept refrigerated.

MacInnes said, "the fox is the number one spreading cause of rabies and skunks will also carry the fox strain of rabies."

More than three million rabies vaccines have been dropped in the

last five years, and MacInnes said the number of rabies incidents has dropped dramatically.

"In 1992 there were 34 cases of rabies reported. In 1993, there were 16 cases, seven of which were bats and one was a fox. Between October 1, 1993 and June 1994, there have only been three cases. One, a horse, another a bat and the third, a fox," he said.

MacInnes said when the fox ingests the vaccine, he believes it is through the absorption of the vaccine in the tonsils that the animal becomes vaccinated.

MacInnes advises anyone who finds the vaccine to handle it very carefully.

"If you find one, leave it be.

There have been cases where we dropped one on someone's front lawn. In this case, if you find one, then throw it into rough land where you are likely to find foxes. If your pet brings one home, then dispose of it very carefully."



Wendy Sinclair, spokesperson for Rabies Ontario said the only way to vaccinate the population of foxes across Ontario was to drop the vaccine by plane.

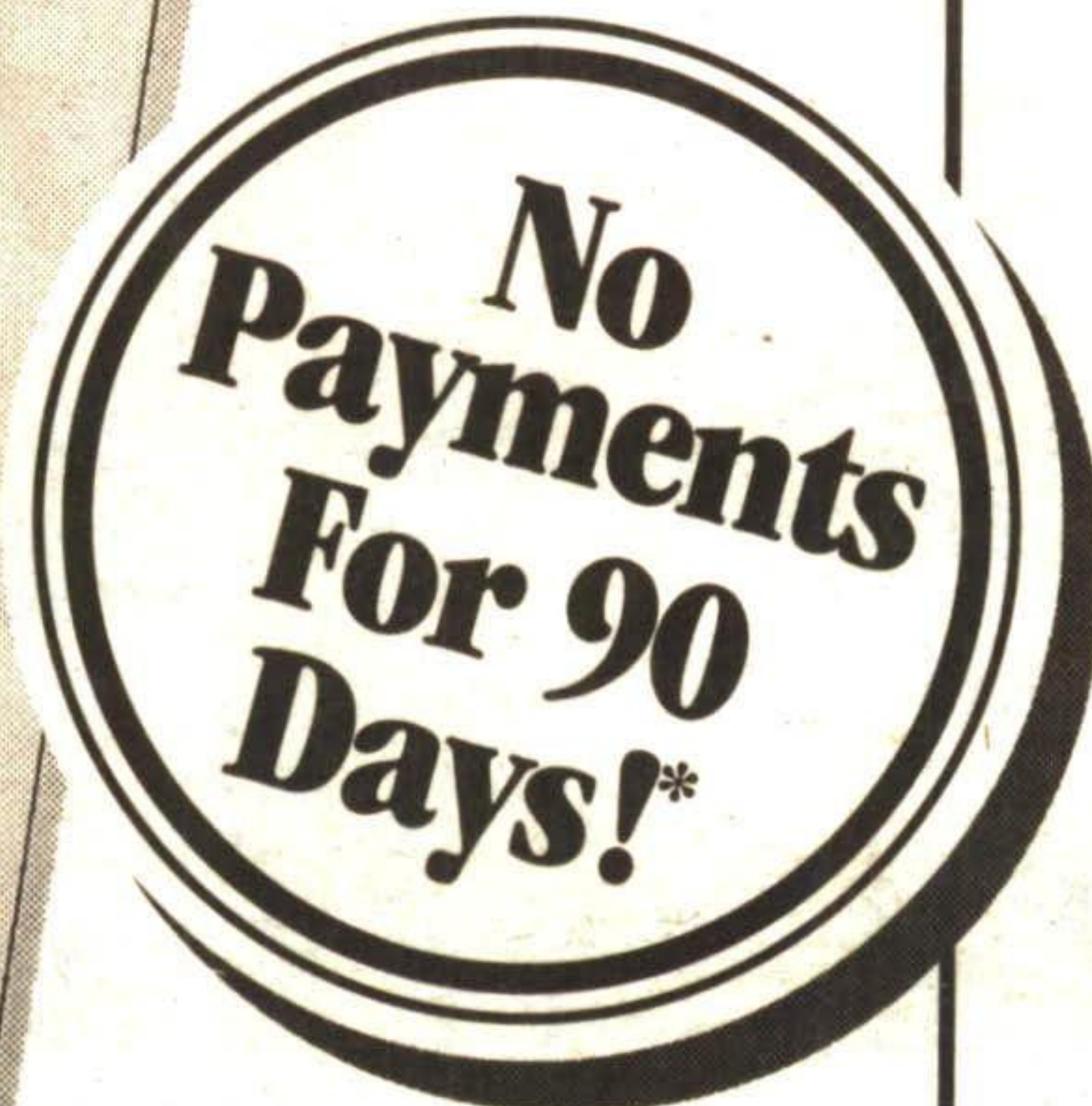
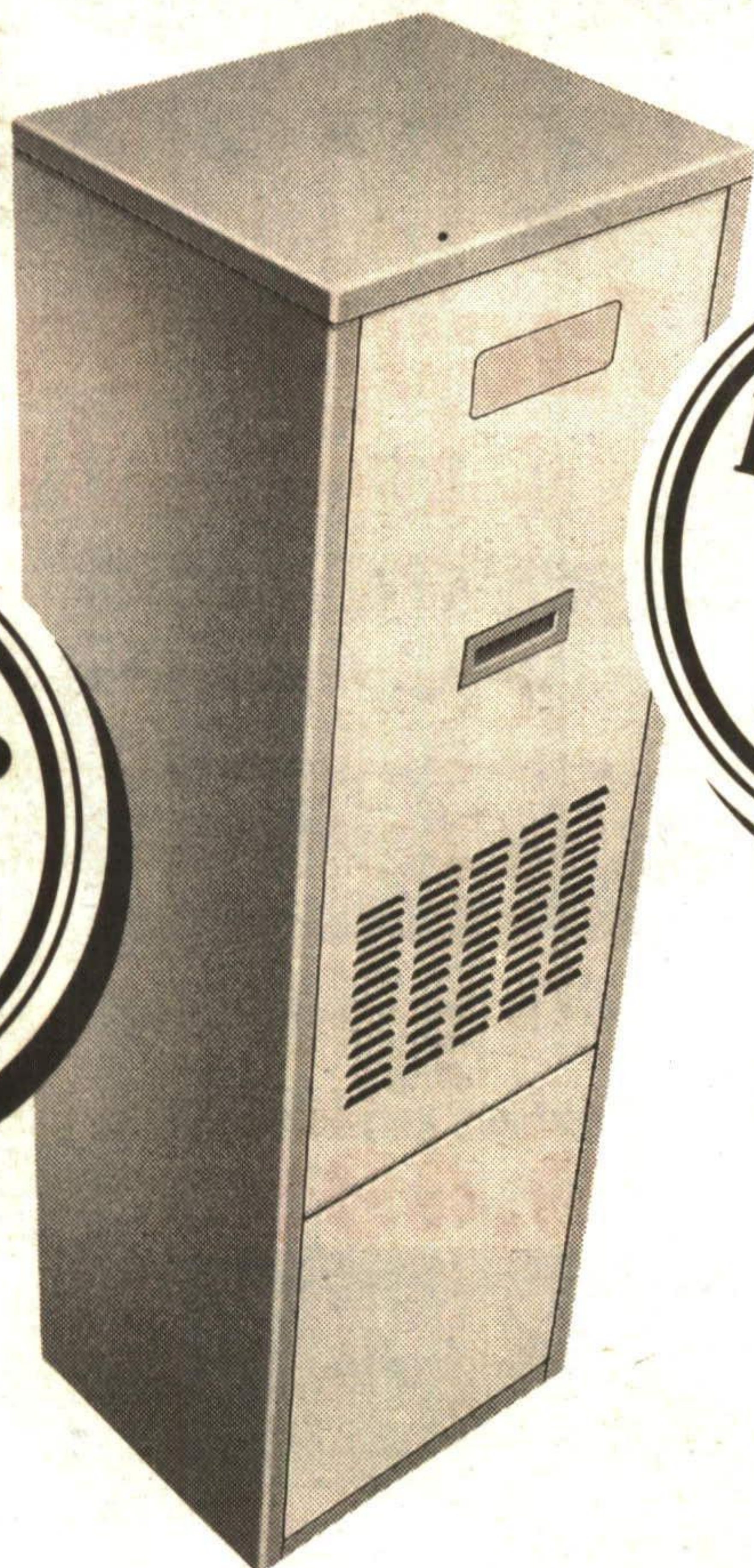
Pezzack said any dogs who eat the package will not be immunized for rabies, but, "the package may cause an obstruction in the intestine if the dog eats it," since it contains foil.

Pezzack suggests if you see the dog eating the package, then it is best to take it away so they don't swallow it.

MacInnes said if anyone would like more information on the rabies vaccine, then phone the Ministry of Natural Resources, Rabies Unit at 905-832-7150.



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Rabid fox discovered dead on Fourth Line last week

Last Saturday, Fourth Line resident Gerda Potzel had a look around to see what the dogs in the area were barking at on the evening before. She found a dead fox.

On Monday it was taken away by Agriculture Canada, which discovered the fox was rabid.

Veterinarian Ed Creighton said this is the second rabid animal found this fall in the Acton area and a couple were found in Speyside as well as one in Moffat.

"It was quiet all summer, but it's starting up again in the fall," he said. This is not an unusual number of rabid animals to be found in the area at this time of year.



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