

PIKE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

PIKE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
506 BROAD STREET
MILFORD, PA 18337
570-296-7613
FAX: 570-296-6055

MATTHEW M. OSTERBERG
RONALD R. SCHMALZLE
STEVEN R. GUCCINI

COMMISSIONERS



GARY R. ORBEN
CHIEF CLERK

THOMAS F. FARLEY, ESQ.
COUNTY SOLICITOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 5, 2021

CONTACT: Krista Gromalski 570-296-9805 office / 570-832-1434 cell / kgromalski@pikepa.org

Tick Borne Diseases Task Force Shares Baseline Study Results *May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month*

MILFORD, PA — In commemoration of May as Lyme Disease Awareness Month, Pike County's Tick Borne Diseases Task Force shared the results of a first-of-its-kind baseline study it conducted from 2018 to 2019 in partnership with the Dr. Jane Huffman Wildlife Genetics Institute at East Stroudsburg University. The public can visit pikepa.org/tick to view a video summarizing the study results.

The Task Force is an initiative of the Pike County Commissioners focused on decreasing the number of tick borne illnesses by building community awareness through education, support, and advocacy. In 2019, its efforts were recognized with an Environmental Partnership Award from the Northeast Environmental Partners.

Study Parameters

"This is the largest county-wide study ever conducted in Pennsylvania, and we are grateful for the partnerships that have made it possible" says Rosemarie Schoepp, who Chairs the Task Force. "Our continuing work will focus on bringing more awareness to this important public health issue and building on our research."

The baseline study involved the collection and testing of 1,000 Blacklegged Ticks for seven disease-causing organisms, called pathogens, which the ticks may carry. The intent was to assess disease and infection rates in order to provide educational outreach to the public and medical professionals on risks and prevention of tick-borne diseases.

The research project was funded by the Pike County Board of Commissioners; Lyme Disease Association, Inc.; the Delaware Valley Educational Foundation; and Pike County Bar Association.

Pike County was divided into a grid of nine sections, with three to five tick collection sites selected per section. Milford Borough was tested as a 10th section with three collection sites. Only blacklegged ticks in the nymph (immature) or adult life stages were tested for diseases.

Any tick species other than blacklegged ticks that were found were collected and accounted for but were not tested for diseases. These included the following species: Dog Tick, Lone Star Tick and Asian Long Horn Tick.

-- MORE --

2 Tick Borne Diseases Task Force Shares Baseline Study Results

Due to the heightened activity of ticks in the spring and fall, the study was conducted from the spring of 2018 through the fall of 2019. Dog Ticks were only found in the springtime as they are not active in their life cycles in the fall.

Results

- A total of 1,051 Blacklegged Ticks and 1,003 Dog Ticks were collected. It was reported that 1 Lone Star Tick and 1 Asian Long Horn Tick were also found. There was a fairly even split between female and male ticks.
- The black legged ticks collected were tested for the following pathogens: Lyme Disease, Anaplasmosis, Babesiosis, Bartonellosis., Mycoplasmosis, Miyamotoi, and Powassan Virus Lineage II (also called Deer Tick Virus).
- Lyme Disease was the most pervasive finding, with 38.77% of the ticks testing positive for this pathogen.
- Bartonellosis was the second highest finding, with 18.52% of the ticks testing positive for this pathogen.
- There were 123 ticks found to be carrying two or more diseases, known as a co-infection. The presence of multiple diseases can complicate a medical diagnosis and treatment and may increase the severity of symptoms. The highest co-infection observed was Lyme disease and Anaplasmosis.

“To date this study is the largest and most comprehensive analysis completed on tickborne illnesses in one county of PA. The results of this study will contribute to the overall goals of the task force by providing fine point data of ticks and tickborne diseases across the county to bring awareness to physicians and residents. With this data, we can provide better education of the risk for exposure to these tickborne diseases in Pike County,” says Nicole Chinnici, Laboratory Director of the Dr. Jane Huffman Wildlife Genetics Institute.

Educational Outreach

The Task Force offers educational brochures to help people prevent tick borne diseases and safely enjoy the great outdoors. The Tick 101 brochure covers identification, removal, symptoms, testing facilities, and prevention techniques. Tick 201 provides proactive measures to help protect your property, and includes a refresher on tick identification and testing.

The Task Force also offers educational materials for children including a short story, lessons, and activity sheets.

The Task Force meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at 10:00 a.m., currently via Zoom. New members are welcome.

For more information on the study’s results, visit the Task Force website at www.pikepa.org/tick or contact Brian Snyder at bsnyder@pikepa.org or by phone 570-296-3500.

###