



The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

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LONE STAR TICK, AN AGGRESSIVE HUMAN BITER AND VECTOR OF SEVERAL HUMAN DISEASES, IS RAPIDLY RANGE EXPANDING IN CONNECTICUT AND THROUGHOUT THE NORTHEAST

New Haven, CT – In an article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, scientists at The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) have highlighted the rapid range expansion of the lone star tick, *Amblyomma americanum* throughout the northeastern United States over the last four decades, and noted its potential for altering the dynamics of a myriad of existing and emerging tick-borne diseases in the region.

Previously limited to the southeastern U.S., the lone star ticks have been detected from areas in the northeastern US with no previous record of activity including Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island, and established populations have now been documented across most of southern New Jersey, Long Island, Fairfield and New Haven Counties in Connecticut, coastal Rhode Island, and on Cape Cod and the Islands.

According to Dr. Goudarz Molaei, the senior author on the paper who also directs the CAES Tick Testing Program, the number of lone star ticks submitted to the CAES Tick Testing Laboratory increased by 58% from the period of 1996-2006 to 2007-2017, mainly from Fairfield County; and in 2019, established populations of this tick were discovered in New Haven County for the first time.

The lone star tick is an aggressive human biter that has been associated with several human diseases and medical conditions, including tularemia, ehrlichiosis, rickettsiosis, Heartland virus disease, southern tick-associated rash illness, red meat allergy and probably the newly identified Bourbon virus disease. In addition, the bites are highly irritating.

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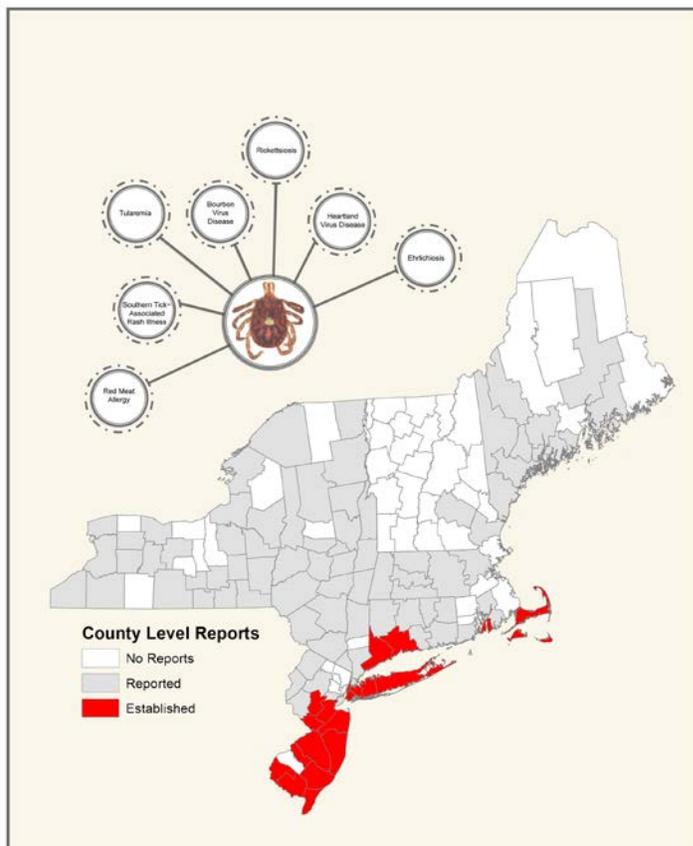
According to the article, rising global temperatures, ecologic changes, reforestation, and increases in commerce and travel are important underlying factors influencing the rate and extent of range expansion for ticks and associated disease causing pathogens. It is anticipated that warming temperatures associated with climate change may lead to the continued geographic range expansion and abundance of the lone star tick increasing its importance as an emerging threat to humans, domesticated animals and wildlife.

Depending upon the annual weather condition, adult lone star ticks are active from mid-March to late June, nymphs from mid-May to late July and larvae from July to September. It is essential for practitioners and the public to develop a heightened awareness of the health risks associated with emergent tick vectors such as the lone star tick and their potential for changing the dynamics of tick-borne diseases in Connecticut and throughout the northeastern United States.

Ticks and tickborne diseases are increasingly becoming a major public health. According to the CDC, more than 90% of the nearly 60,000 cases of nationally notifiable vector-borne diseases reported in 2017 were linked to ticks.

Detailed information about the Tick Testing Laboratory, personal protection measures, tick control measures, and tick-associated diseases can be found at the following websites:

<http://www.ct.gov/caes/cwp/view.asp?a=2837&q=378212&caesNav=1>
<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/tickbornediseases/tickID.html>



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