



The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

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INTRODUCTION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF INVASIVE TICKS AS A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC HEALTH AND VETERINARY CONCERN IN CONNECTICUT

New Haven, CT – The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) reports the increasing frequency of the introduction of live specimens of invasive ticks of public health concern into Connecticut by hitchhiking on human travelers returning from international destinations. These invasive ticks are capable of establishing populations and rapid range expansion due to an increasingly hospitable environment and have the potential to introduce new tick-borne pathogens and alter the dynamics of a myriad of existing and emerging tick-borne diseases in the state and throughout the Northeast. Both human travel and the expansion of the legal and illegal plant and animal trades are important contributing factors for the potential importation, establishment, and expansion of exotic ticks and their associated pathogens into new regions, resulting in considerable public and veterinary health concerns.

“The number of invasive ticks intercepted Connecticut has increased substantially in recent years, and just within the past few weeks, the CAES tick testing laboratory has received at least four exotic tick species from state residents returning to Connecticut from international destinations, including Europe, Africa, and South and Central America. These new introductions are in addition to several invasive ticks that the CAES has reported in the past few years, some of which have already established populations in the state, including the lone star tick, Gulf Coast tick, and Asian longhorned tick, placing new communities at risk for tick and tick-borne disease exposure,” said Dr. Goudarz Molaei, a Chief Medical Entomologist who also directs the CAES Tick and Tick-borne Diseases Surveillance Program.

The introduction of exotic tick vectors of bacteria, protozoa, viruses, and filarial parasites into Connecticut has accelerated in recent years due to increased trade, international travel, and the movement of wildlife. Native tick species are also expanding their ranges, which has been linked to environmental changes, a warming climate, and increased human and animal host populations.

To prevent tick bites and reduce the risk of exposure to tick-borne diseases, residents should:

- Avoid or limit activity in tick-infested areas including grassy, brushy, or wooded areas.
- Treat clothing and gear with approved acaricides (e.g., products containing 0.5% permethrin).
- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered repellents containing DEET and other products.
- Check your clothing for ticks
- Check your body and shower after outdoor activity
- Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on clothing after outdoor activity.

It is also important for travelers and practitioners to develop a heightened awareness of the public health risks associated with the unintended importation of exotic ticks and the potential such parasites have for breaching United States biosecurity defenses.

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

<https://portal.ct.gov/CAES/Tick-Office/Tick-Office/Information-on-Submitting-Ticks>

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/CAES/DOCUMENTS/Publications/Bulletins/b1010pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/tickbornediseases/tickID.html>

https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/geographic_distribution.html

https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_people.html



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