

PRESS RELEASE

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Cooperative Extension Assists Neighborhood Groups in Monitoring Tick Populations

Onondaga County, Syracuse, NY: Cornell Cooperative Extension Onondaga County has been facilitating community groups discussing suburban deer in residential neighborhoods and what to do about them. One of the main concerns that residents express is increasing rates of tick bites and Lyme disease and the association with expanding deer herds.

CCE Onondaga Natural Resource Educators help residents understand the complex relationship between deer and tick populations as well as provide education about both, as part of the community education process.

“Every neighborhood group that has approached us for help has expressed concern over ticks and Lyme disease,” says Thomas Cross, Team Leader for Natural Resources and the Environment for CCE Onondaga. “The key is understanding that managing for deer may lower tick populations and Lyme disease incidence, but not eliminate the risk. Our staff helps residents connect with these facts on the ground, literally.”

CCE Onondaga encourages resident volunteer groups working on deer management plans to do semi-annual tick population monitoring as part of an overall plan to study the long term impacts deer management has on tick populations. Educators train neighborhood volunteers to assist in the monitoring, which takes place twice a year in the backyards of participating homeowners. The ticks are collected, counted and identified, and then sent to the NYS Department of Health for disease testing.

The Onondaga County Legislature provides financial support to implement deer and tick management plans in the county. The Deer and Tick Management Advisory Committee, a sub-committee of the Legislature, reviews and evaluates proposed plans from municipalities, as well as neighborhood groups.

“Unfortunately the number of diagnosed cases of Lyme disease and other tick related diseases are on the rise in our community,” says Ryan McMahon, Chairman of the Onondaga County Legislature. “We recognize that deer management is not the only solution to the reduction of tick density and we must continue to educate our residents on personal protection, as well as preventative landscaping methods. The Legislature will continue to support those plans that include an educational component as well as a metrics to track a plan’s impact over time.”

On Friday, August 4 at 4:30 p.m. at 306 DeWitt Road in Syracuse, CCE Onondaga and resident volunteers from the Syracuse Eastside Neighbors group will be demonstrating a tick drag for media. Staff from CCE Onondaga, Onondaga County Legislature Chairman Ryan McMahon, and resident volunteers will be present to demonstrate and explain the process.

Please contact Thomas Cross at CCE Onondaga with questions tac243@cornell.edu or (315) 424-9485 ext. 229.

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