

Tickborne Disease Work Group 2023

June 9th, 2023

Meeting location: Virtual

Meeting time: 1PM-5PM

Meeting participants:

Ellen Stromdahl, Defense Centers for Public Health (retired)
Robyn Nadolny, Defense Centers for Public Health
Vanessa Wigand, Virginia Department of Education
Emily Spangler, Virginia Resident
Matthew Allen, Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association
Holly Gaff, Old Dominion University
Wayne Hynes, Old Dominion University
Josh Bernick, Virginia Department of Health
Lori Flammia, Virginia Department of Health
David Gaines, Virginia Department of Health
Julia Murphy, Virginia Department of Health
Eleanor Field, Virginia Department of Health
Matthew Shockey, Virginia Department of Agricultural Services
Sammy Zambon, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Chris Haskins, Virginia Farm Bureau
Greg Skall, National Capital Lyme Disease Association
Monte Skall, National Capital Lyme Disease Association
Christopher Roe, Montgomery County Public Schools
Maria Circosta, Virginia Council of Nurse Practitioners
Elizabeth Sutton, Virginia Council of Nurse Practitioners
Charlie Paullin, Virginia Mercury
Linda Grace, Virginia Veterinary Medical Association
John Tracey, Department of Wildlife Resources
Kathy Hosig, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Chad Briggs, Virginia Department of Forestry
Laurie Chamberlain, Virginia Department of Forestry
Jory Brinkerhoff, University of Richmond
Carolyn Bissett, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Welcome and Introductions

Julia Murphy, State Public Health Veterinarian with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), introduced herself and welcomed attendees. She then asked all meeting participants introduced themselves to the group with both name and affiliation.

Previous Meeting's Minutes

Minutes were adjusted to correct the spelling of certain names. The minutes were then unanimously approved. The meetings, the agenda, and the minutes are posted on the town hall for anyone to review. If there is going to be more than 10 business days between when the minutes would be approved a draft copy would be made available online.

Report timeline and enrolled bill language review

Julia Murphy reiterated the timeline for the final report submission to the VDH senior leadership of September 1, 2023. A review of the language:

The language of HB2008, which was enacted by the 2023 General Assembly on March 21, 2023, and major aspects of tickborne disease that the work group has been tasked with addressing in its report were reviewed, namely:

- (i) increasing public awareness of tick-borne diseases and strategies for preventing tick-borne diseases,
- (ii) educating health care providers and the public about the importance of and need for early diagnosis and treatment of tick-borne diseases,
- (iii) improving public health surveillance and data collection related to tick-borne diseases, and
- (iv) developing and implementing strategies to reduce tick populations and reduce the risk of exposure to and transmission of tick-borne diseases in the Commonwealth.

Review and Discussion of First Draft

VDH information technology personnel are assisting in cases where access to the SharePoint drive where meeting materials are being uploaded for work group reference. Anyone in need of assistance with access to the SharePoint site should contact Julia Murphy. If necessary, arrangements can be made to transfer these materials manually via flash drive if necessary and that can be done at the in-person meeting in July.

Julia Murphy provided a quick overview of the report draft format, group structure, and meeting dates. A more in-depth overview of the initial draft of the report then followed. Feedback about the draft included Dr. Nadolny's comment that she had some edits related to the importance of *Dermacentor variabilis* as a tick of human health importance and that she would provide these edits by email after the meeting. There was discussion concerning the difficulty in finding tick testing laboratories to

test ticks found on individuals and that CDC resources to test ticks for public health entomology purposes are limited. Discussion then turned to tick testing from active surveillance and passive surveillance approaches. There was also discussion about the interest some people have in testing individual ticks found on them and the importance of guidance regarding the interpretation of those results. In addition, the value of testing ticks to understand the overall incidence of infection in ticks in order to complement, along with human infection rates, the general public's understanding of where risk lies in the environment and the importance of exposure prevention, was also discussed. The group agreed that pending Dr. Nadolny's edits and the addition of the general budget associated with tick testing for public health purposes via Virginia Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services, this aspect of the report is accepted as final.

Presentations

Monte Skall, Executive Director, National Capital Lyme Disease Association

A brief overview of the organization was provided. A personal story from a Lyme case patient was shared to demonstrate the impact of delayed diagnosis.

The recommendations from this association include: appropriate funding for a tick-borne disease awareness and prevention program, public awareness and advertising campaigns on a state and local level that include direct mail, CME courses, radio PSAs and geo-targeted TV ads, public awareness and advertising campaigns, free tick testing services, financial support for academic institutions to conduct research, outreach to minority groups and underserved communities, collaborative partnerships across agencies, organizations, clinicians/healthcare workers, educators, and patients. An example of a collaboration between the American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics to share tick-borne disease prevention messages was highlighted.

Collaboration ideas to create educational programs to teach tick awareness and prevention skills such as (i) awareness program for teachers and school nurses, (ii) Boy & Girl Scouts tick awareness badges for community service, (iii) awareness and prevention program to be taught by school health and physical education teachers, (iv) annual conference meetings of the Virginia Association of School Nurses, Virginia Nurse Practitioners, and the Virginia Physicians Assistants were shared.

Other education and surveillance ideas were shared including: (i) A focused campaign to help educate physicians was discussed such as a one-day CME workshops, (ii) Faster/improved channels for communication on tick-borne diseases to health-care professionals, (iii) A required, annual updated vector-borne disease education webinar for physicians, healthcare workers & public-at-large, (iv) An animal disease surveillance system could be useful, incorporating some information about positive diagnosis in

animals and (v) Employer/employee protection programs are needed. Incorporate data from military bases into Virginia statistics.

Information about the Tick Busters campaign was discussed, along with the educational material that was developed (story book, coloring book, brochure, library rack card, tick ID card, temporary tattoo, videos, K-6 lesson plans). A short video with a news segment on asking children how to prevent tick bites was shared.

Christopher Roe shared his testimony about how education on tick-borne diseases and tick prevention is essential and his support for the Tick Busters program.

“DCR/Virginia State Parks Tick Education” Sammy Zambon, Visitor Experience Specialist, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Identifying audiences is an important first step to direct outreach efforts. Fliers, magnets, tick repellent, signage, touch tables/welcome campfires incorporated as part of tick prevention strategies. Potential to incorporate tick ID cards. Difficulty in there being space on trail heads for prevention information and so targeting picnic tables instead. Outreach to youth has been a priority, incorporating tick info and safety in junior rangers program, coordinating with pollinator program. Including QR codes to Spanish materials, limiting text even in translated materials for improved access or including audio format.

Tick logs have been in place for years at Virginia State Parks – recording method for ticks found on the park. Lunchtime awareness programming for staff is an area to explore. Pet owners can be an audience to increase outreach to. Overall strategy is to use small signage for select park benches (quick, accessible phrasing), fliers, multilanguage Rack cards, interpretive programming, junior ranger programming, gift shop.

There is discussion about VDH offering to provide educational materials to VCR. There is discussion about using the large 3D tick model as a teaching tool, and discussion about how to use this further. There is discussion about site-specific educational material depending on the geographical placement in Virginia (differences of distribution across the state to prevent misleading risks).

Joshua Bernick, Rabies and Vector-borne Epidemiologist, Virginia Department of Health
Active and passive outreach approaches are shared, with examples of audiences. Some active outreach activities have been presentations to clinician groups, master naturalists/gardeners, and youth organizations. TV and radio interviews as well are used. Passive outreach examples include the Ticks and Human Health VDH website, our flyer, surveys, and social media posts.

Key messages include information on tick species and their pathogens in Virginia (graphs, tables, maps), information on tick repellents, personal protective measures people can take.

The Virginia Tick Survey provides an interactive platform for people to send either a tick specimen or tick photo for identification. This is stored in a REDCap database. Expanding to include a veterinary tick survey for companion animal data.

Pros and cons of active and passive outreach approaches are shared with regards to audience size reached, interactive/feedback ability with the audience. Social media needs to have timely information, appropriateness of content. Websites need to be easily accessible. Considerations moving forward to be to update public-facing materials, support and work with other agencies to develop educational material/programming.

Discussion about how VDH is communicating this material, suggestion of a public service announcement. Julia Murphy discussed the routine communication between veterinary professionals and VDH and the desire for VDH to continue/build collaborations.

Public Comment

None.

Final points

The next meeting (July 13) will be in-person, final location is still being determined and will be communicated next week. A majority of the group must be present in-person. Reference materials will continue to be gathered to be added to the shared drive.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35PM.