

On April 17th 2013 at the regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Health, the Board voted to support the Weston Conservation Commission's Deer Management Initiatives. The following letter provides the rationale for Board of Health's position.

The Weston Board of Health (BOH) would like to give full support to the Weston Conservation Commission's Deer Management Program, incorporating controlled bow and arrow deer hunting to reduce the deer population. This is a potentially important environmental intervention in the control of tick-borne disease, and Lyme disease in particular.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Lyme Disease Surveillance report shows Massachusetts as one of the states with the highest incidence of Lyme disease. It is important to realize reported rates vary between years and limitations to the surveillance process make it difficult to interpret these variations as true increases or decreases in disease incidence, as cautioned on the CDC website. It is, however, clear from the CDC data that Lyme disease is endemic to Massachusetts. In addition, Lyme disease is considerably under reported and the true incidence of Lyme disease in Massachusetts may be at least 10-fold greater than reported.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has recognized the significance of tick-borne diseases to state residents, and in 2011 a Special Commission to Conduct an Investigation and Study of the Incidence and Impacts of Lyme Disease (The Commission) was formed. The Commission released a report of their findings on 28 February 2013. The Weston BOH encourages interested citizens to read this report which can be found on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts website (www.tinyurl.com/LymeDiseaseReport)

The Commission report emphasizes the importance of an integrated approach of both short term and long term preventive strategies for preventing Lyme disease including vaccine development, public and physician education, and environmental controls along with the provision of the necessary funding to support these important initiatives. Specific preventive measures include repellent use and regular tick checks, public education on the recognition of symptoms of tick bite disease that should prompt immediate evaluation by a healthcare provider, habitat modification where possible, and enhanced deer management.

Environmental interventions are necessary in the prevention of tick-borne diseases. Lyme disease has resulted from habitat changes that have occurred over many years in Massachusetts and other states with a high prevalence of Lyme disease. These changes have been accompanied by the expansion in the density and distribution of white tailed deer, the primary host for the adult deer tick responsible for the spread of Lyme disease.

The deer tick goes through stages of maturation that include larvae and nymph forms that feed on small animals such as mice, birds, squirrels and chipmunks, but only the adult tick is reproductive. *Control measures directly targeting the reduction of the adult deer tick is most important and necessary.* Insecticide use can be effective, but requires special considerations regarding safety and current laws restricting wide-spread use. Programs delivering an effective insecticide directly through the deer host require intense, repeated application, are likely to result in resistant ticks and are currently considered

cost prohibitive. Thus, as stated in The Commission report, the only environmental factor over which we have any possible control is deer density.

Studies have demonstrated that controlled bow hunting is one of the most effective and safe deer management strategies to reduce deer density in suburban communities. The Weston BOH recognizes the potential importance of the Weston Conservation Commission's controlled bow hunting deer reduction program and we applaud the comprehensive assessment and safety measures they built into this program. We encourage the Town of Weston to continue to support this program.

Respectfully submitted by the members of the Weston Board of Health for consideration by the residents of the Town of Weston