



May 5, 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

Community Tick Control Project – Isle au Haut

1. What is the Project?

Interest has risen in ways to control the tick that transmits Lyme disease, the black-legged or 'deer' tick. This project will be an attempt to control these ticks at a community-wide scale (as opposed to just individual properties), where the end result will be an overall decline in tick numbers AND a drop in the infection rate of ticks that remain.

2. How will ticks be controlled?

The project involves treating two key wildlife hosts of deer ticks on Isle au Haut: deer mice and white-tailed deer. The primary host for juvenile ticks in the summer, mice, will be treated with a common veterinary compound called fipronil, frequently given to cats and dogs to control ticks and fleas. The fipronil will be delivered to the mice via sealed bait stations. Deer will be administered corn treated with a formulation of ivermectin call Moxidectin, a common drug used in veterinary and human medicine, in attempt to kill adult stage deer ticks feeding on deer in the late fall and early spring.

3. Who is involved?

This is a joint project between the MaineHealth Institute for Research (formerly Maine Medical Center Research Institute), the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and White Buffalo Inc. Staff from MaineHealth, including Chuck Lubelczyk and Molly Meagher, will be working with Dane Stevens from White Buffalo (and a resident of IAH) to coordinate the project on the island. Tick samples collected during this project will be tested at the US Center for Disease Control.

4. What is the project timeline?

This 5 year project will begin during the summer of 2023, with staff gathering baseline data on abundance and infection rates of ticks in vegetation and on wildlife. Treatment of deer and mice will begin in the second year of the study and continue through 2026 or 2027.

5. Where on the island will work be done?

Work on this project will be conducted island wide, mostly on lands owned by private residents of Isle au Haut who have granted access to their properties. Placement of mouse treatment stations will be in wooded areas surrounding homes. Deer feeding stations, when deployed, will be located at select locations across the island.

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