

# DEER MANAGEMENT PANEL

Town of Carlisle, MA

Thursday, January 15, 2015

## SUMMARIZED RESULTS OF Q & A

Hosted by: the Carlisle Board of Health and the Carlisle Board of Health Lyme Disease Subcommittee

Reason for Panel: *To discuss bow hunting as an approach to deer management in the Town of Carlisle and its effect on the incidence of tick-borne diseases.*

Location: Carlisle Public School Auditorium

Attendees (approximately 77): Carlisle residents, as well as some residents of surrounding towns; representatives from the Carlisle Board of Health and its Lyme Disease Subcommittee; the Carlisle Conservation Commission; and, a representative from the Carlisle Board of Selectman.

Panel Moderator: Jean Barry, M.D., chair of the Carlisle Lyme Disease Subcommittee

Panelists (4):

- David Stainbrook, Deer and Moose Project Biologist, State Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife)
- Pat Huckery, Northeast District Supervisor of MassWildlife
- Dr. Barbara Roth Schecter, Chairman, Dover Board of Health
- George Giunta, Deer Management Agent, Town of Dover

## Question/Answer Session

Note: The following is approximate verbatim, as session was not taped.

**1. Would the Town (Carlisle) consider sterilization to remove a deer's reproductive organs as a means to manage the deer population? Is it effective?**

*David Stainbrook: Sterilization reduces the number of fawns, but has not proven to be effective since it is expensive, must be repeated, and other deer will migrate into an area where the procedure was conducted.*

**2. Has the Town of Dover had to track injured deer as a result of bow hunting?**

*Barbara Roth Schecter: Yes, there were two deer that were injured by hunters; they ran and couldn't be found, but it's believed that coyote eventually got them.*

**3. Is there chronic waste disease (CWD) among animals in Massachusetts?**

*David Stainbrook: Massachusetts is free of CWD, but it has been found in New York and Pennsylvania.*

**4. Will the slides be made available on the Town of Carlisle web site?**

*David Stainbrook: The slides will be sent to the Carlisle BoH.*

**5. What is the typical home range of deer?**

*David Stainbrook: 1/2 square mile for females in eastern Massachusetts and 3 square miles for females in the western part of the state; for bucks the range is from 1-3 square miles.*

**6. Is there a relationship between bird feeders and Lyme disease?**

*Jean Barry: Barry suggested that residents consider eliminating bird feeders, stating that there is recent evidence documenting a link between tick larvae and birds. She added that shrews, mice and chipmunks that congregate at bird feeders can have tick larvae.*

**7. Can woodchucks, rabbits or squirrels replace deer as the blood meal for ticks?**

*David Stainbrook: Woodchucks could possibly serve as hosts, but the other animals would be hosts for nymphs only. He added that adult ticks climb up*

*vegetation several feet off of the ground and wait to drop on a large host such as a black bear, moose or deer.*

**8. What is the proportion of landscape versus wooded vegetation that a deer eats per day?**

*David Stainbrook: Deer go to the best, easiest source for food and that depends on winter versus summer. An adult deer consumes 10 pounds of food per day.*

**9. Has the idea of arming sharp shooters with neuro toxins been considered?**

*George Giunta: We considered this, but the logistics to do this type of deer management are very difficult since the deer must be baited, which is not permitted by a State Agency.*

**10. What happens when a hunter is in hot pursuit of a wounded deer that runs onto private property?**

*George Giunta: The hunter must knock on the door of the property owner to ask permission to retrieve the injured deer; the Town of Dover has had only a couple of such incidents in the six years of their controlled hunting program.*

**11. Since the American Lyme Disease Foundation does not advocate hunting deer to reduce the incidence of Lyme disease, why do it? The attendee added that the Foundation found no linear correlation between the number of deer and the incidence of Lyme disease. Also asked: Are other methods, such as the “four-poster” feeding stations where deer brush against rollers treated with insecticides while reaching the food, a better way to control Lyme disease?**

*Barbara Roth Schechter: Schechter did not agree with the attendee’s interpretation of the findings of the study by the American Lyme Disease Foundation. She added that a recently published study from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection evaluated the relationship between deer density, tick abundance and human cases of Lyme disease. This study showed that a reduction in deer density to 13 deer per square mile resulted in a 50% reduction in the rate*

*of tick infection and an 80% reduction in resident-reported human cases of Lyme disease.*

*David Stainbrook: The relationship is not linear. If you have 100 deer per square mile and drop it in half you will see no change. Deer density must drop to some level where it becomes limiting factor to be a blood meal for ticks – as low as ten to 15 deer per square mile. There is a clear correlation at that level; it is not linear.*

**12. Is Dover’s deer management agent a Town employee?**

*George Giunta: He receives an annual \$500 stipend from the town.*

**13. What accounts for the explosive growth in the deer population?**

*David Stainbrook: Deer do not have some of the predators they once had, including mountain lions and wolves.*

**14. Is there a listing of towns in Massachusetts that permit deer hunting on conservation lands?**

*David Stainbrook: Unfortunately, no there is no such list.*

**15. Can woodchucks, rabbits, and squirrels provide blood meal for ticks?**

*David Stainbrook: Yes, they can.*

**16. What about safety concerns relative to walking dogs when the deer hunting season is on?**

*George Giunta: A bow hunter in the Dover program typically has 20 years experience and averages 35 years old. Currently, there are 975 acres of Dover Town land in the (deer hunting) program and each hunter is afforded 20 acres. Each year, we conduct a background check on every hunter. In Dover, we’ve had one illegal hunter who, when identified, was (subsequently) arrested by the police. The public is notified of the areas with tree stands. During bow hunting season, people still walk the trails, walk their dogs and ride their bikes and horses; people have not lost use of public lands.*

*Pat Huckery: On the state level, there has not been a non-hunter injury in archery season.*

**17. Does anyone walk through the woods to enforce hunting laws (in Dover)?**

*George Giunta: No, there is no one who routinely checks on hunters, but if someone raises a question about a hunter, it will be followed up on.*

*Pat Huckery: The state environmental police are another source of enforcement that towns can call upon.*

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