

# PRESENTATION TO TOWN BOARD

Town of Bethlehem Deer and Tick Borne Disease Committee

March 2015



# What we are going to present

- Committee formation and goal
- Topics explored
- Community survey
- Recommendations
- Questions?

# COMMITTEE FORMATION AND GOALS

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# Formation

- Town Board formed committee to better understand community concerns with the deer population in town and tick borne disease (March 2014)
- Town Board requested the committee report on these issues and determine whether there were appropriate actions for the town to undertake within a year
- Committee consists of community residents with varied professional and personal experience
- Monthly meetings from April 2014 – February 2015

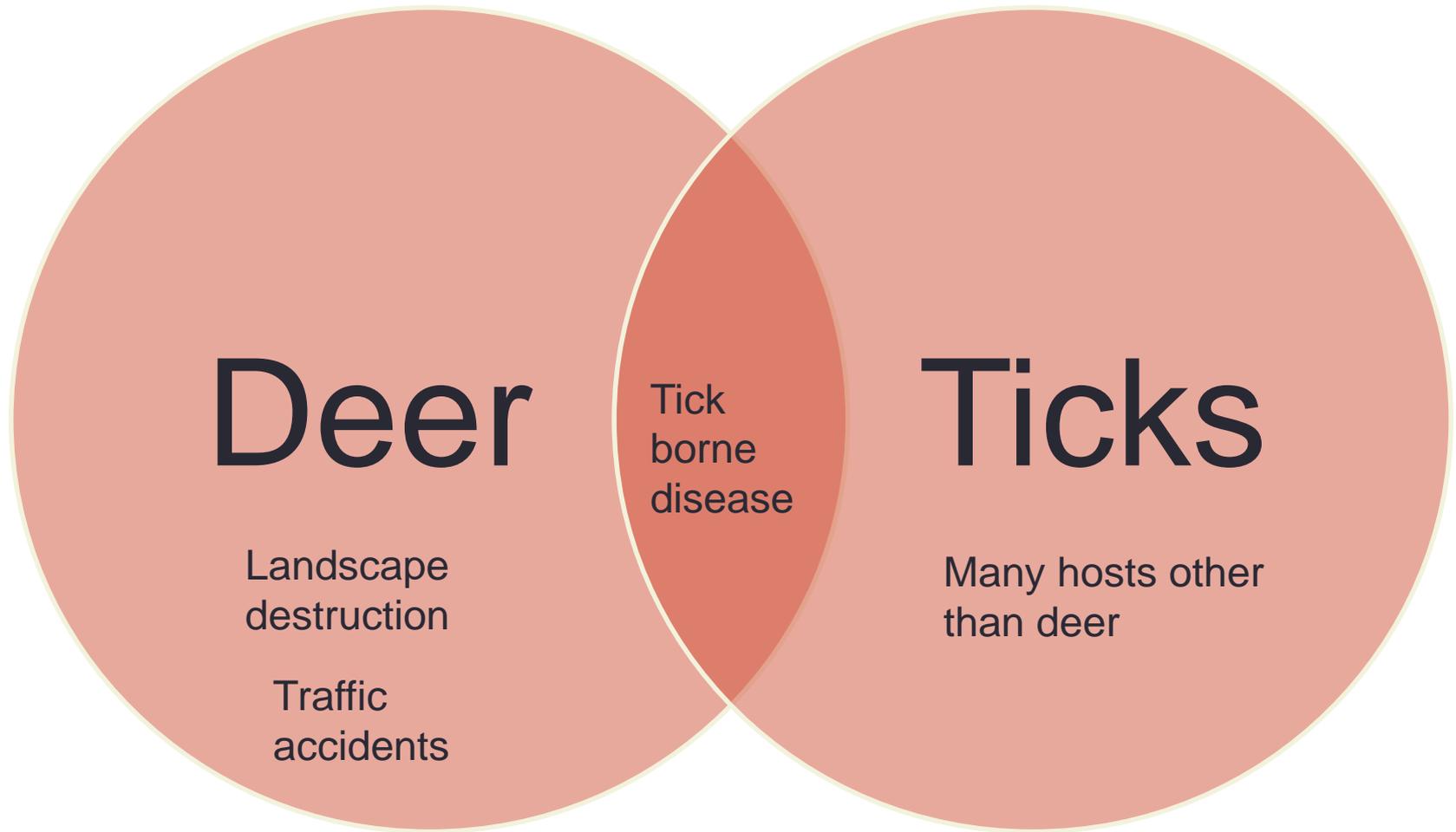
# Goals of committee

- Educate members on issues related to the deer population and tick borne disease
- Determine the degree of community concerns with the deer population and tick borne disease
- Explore possible interventions to address each of these issues and assess which interventions are appropriate for the Town of Bethlehem to undertake

# TOPICS EXPLORED

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# Two different issues



# Presentations to committee

- **May 2014:** Karl Parker DEC Wildlife Biologist presented on DEC's deer management structure, a brief history of deer management in Albany County, the issues and challenges we face in trying to manage deer in an urban/suburban environment, and how these challenges might be addressed.
- **June 2014:** Melissa Prusinski, Research Scientist and Laboratory Supervisor, New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Communicable Disease Control, Vector Ecology Laboratory presented on ticks and tick borne disease in NYS.
- **July 2014:** Matt Frye, NYS Integrated Pest Management Program presented on understanding ticks and their management.

# Presentations to committee

- **August 2014:** Dr. Alan Sanders and Susan Wong (NYS DOH) presented on tick borne disease diagnosis, presentation, and testing.
- **September 2014:** Dick Watt, TOB Animal Control officer spoke about his professional experience with deer and other animals, Mandy Fallon, Bethlehem Garden Club, presented on deer and landscaping damage, and Dr. Tara Estra, Canterbury Veterinary Hospital, talked about how tick borne disease impacts our pets.
- **October 2014:** Mike Snyder, ecologist, spoke about Biodiversity and Ecology.

# Presentations to committee

- **November 2014:** Laura Simon, Wildlife Ecologist and Director of the National Humane Society presented on Solving the Deer Problem: What's Practical and What's Possible?
- **December 2014:** Various committee members researched and reported back to the whole committee on what other municipalities have done to address both deer and ticks in their community; including what has been effective and what has not.

# COMMUNITY SURVEY

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# The details

- Goal – to assess community experience with deer and tick populations
- Online survey – free, simple method to garner community input, distributed via numerous outlets
- Survey launched on 9/10/14 and closed on 10/15/14
- 1740 responses collected
- Survey results are NOT intended to be representative of the ENTIRE community...

# Big picture

- Deer are a nuisance
- Nobody likes ticks
- Responses varied by geography
- Respondents had lots of comments



black-legged, or deer, tick  
(Ixodes scapularis)



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# Landscape and garden damage

- 73% of respondents have experienced landscape or garden damage
- Of those experiencing damage, 75% felt interventions they used to deter deer were either ineffective or only somewhat effective
- Popular interventions: deer resistant plantings, fencing, urine/predatory scent products, soap or spray deterrents

# Driving and traffic concerns

- 66% of respondents see deer at least 1-2x week on or near town roads
  - 25% see them almost daily
- 23% report someone in their immediate family being in a deer/car accident on town roads
  - Of those experiencing an accident 26% described “major damage”
- Only 50% of respondents reported accident to BPD

# Too many deer?

- 49% of respondents say
  - *There are way too many deer in Bethlehem and it's a problem*

# Nobody likes ticks

- 81% of respondents have found ticks on their body (or that of an immediate family member)
- 86% of respondents know someone who has had a tick borne disease
  - 39% of respondents report that either they or an immediate family member have been diagnosed
- 27% of respondents feel like they have a pretty good handle on controlling ticks

# Responses\* varied by geography

- Refer to the survey summary on the committee webpage to see the question by question variation but in general, the negative impact of deer and ticks is felt more greatly in Delmar and Slingerlands/North Bethlehem, as opposed to Glenmont and Selkirk/ South Bethlehem

*\*to some questions*

# Respondents had lots of comments

- 663 (38%) respondents took the time to answer
  - *If you have any thoughts you'd like to share, here's your chance!*

# Recurring themes in comments

- Development has caused the deer population problem
- Heart breaking personal anecdotes about tick borne disease
- Hunting might be part of the answer to reduce the deer population
  - But some respondents felt VERY strongly that only non-lethal interventions are acceptable
- Non-toxic methods of tick control important

# Recurring themes in comments

- Co-exist with nature
- Deer are not the only host animals for ticks
- Personal responsibility
- Education

# Community support

- 84% of respondents in favor of Town looking at methods of reducing tick population
- 61% of respondents in favor of Town looking at methods of reducing deer population

# SUMMARY OF INFORMATION GATHERED

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# Consensus among committee members

- After reviewing all the information presented and the results of the community survey, committee members agreed that the town board should address both the deer and the tick populations in our community.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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# ESTABLISH A STANDING COMMITTEE

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# Committee composition

- Working name – Bethlehem Management Program for Deer and Ticks (open to name suggestions)
- To include: at least one town staff representative, along with interested members of current committee and new members as appropriate
- Committee will welcome assistance from community resources including, but not limited to:
  - School districts in town (3)
  - Department of Health (county and state)
  - MHLC, 5 Rivers, etc.
  - Cornell Cooperative Extension
  - Representatives from local college environmental science programs
  - Scouting organizations
  - Interested residents

# Committee goals and priorities

- **Goals**

- Public education/awareness
- Implementation of interventions identified and recommended by Deer and Tick Borne Disease Committee

- **Priorities**

- Interventions most easily implemented at the individual citizen level
- Low cost, low controversy interventions

# Public awareness campaigns

- **Managing deer population**

- Reduce public feeding of deer
- Reduce deer/car collisions
- Utilize effective landscape management to reduce deer feeding areas and destruction

- **Managing tick population and tick borne disease**

- Habitat management to reduce tick population
- Tick borne disease education for children and adults
- Education regarding personal protection/tick removal

# Recommended interventions

- **Monitor deer population/measure the impact of deer on community**
  - Variety of options for monitoring the population as well as potential partners to engage in process – new committee should determine which is best
- **Reduce deer/car collisions**
  - Utilize traffic trailers with flashing messages in “hot spots”
  - Install roadside reflectors in “hot spots”
  - Install deer crossing signs at identified areas
  - Wildlife warning whistles
  - Explore additional ways to encourage accident reporting

# Recommended interventions

- **Reduce landscape damage from deer**
  - Partner with local businesses to provide deer deterrents at lower cost
- **Manage deer habitat**
  - Make Planning Board aware of impact of new development on deer population and develop suggested criteria that consider impact on wildlife when approving new development site (including the problems of having pockets of habitat close to residential areas)
- **Reduce tick population**
  - Develop a program to offer Damminex tubes (or bait boxes for small mammals) at cost to town residents or host a workshop teaching residents to make their own

# REDUCING THE DEER POPULATION

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# Matching service

- Connect landowners who wish to reduce the deer population on their property with qualified hunters (during regular hunting season); partner with DEC if they have an existing list

# Bethlehem Deer Management Plan

- Develop a town specific DMP with DEC
  - This might include:
    - A longer hunting season
    - More hunting permits issued
    - Hunting on currently prohibited lands (ie: town owned or other public lands)
    - Gun hunting near the Hudson River
    - Etc.

**NOT RECOMMENDED**

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# Interventions we don't recommend

- Organizing a town sponsored cull of the deer population
- Applying for a permit to develop a deer contraception program
- Developing a surgical deer sterilization program
- Developing a deer capture and release program
- Developing a deer trap and euthanize program
- Seeking DEC approval to utilize Four Poster Bait stations to reduce the tick population on deer
- Pesticide application on town owned lands

# Final thoughts from committee members

QUESTIONS?

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# Committee Members

- Julie Sasso, Chair
- Dr. Keith Derbyshire
- Dr. Tara Estra
- Mandy Fallon
- Linda Jasinski
- Josh Kapczynski
- Tim Koch
- Mary Perillo
- Dr. Alan Sanders
- Mary Jane Serfilippi
- Mike Snyder
- Ed Tesiny
- Mike Walker
- Dick Watt, Animal Control officer