

Most of the work THOs do in the community relates to environmental public health. Occasionally, THOs will be involved in the reporting, investigation and management of infectious diseases.

The most common instances involve the prevention of mosquito-borne and tickborne diseases. THOs can help share vector-surveillance information and evidence-based prevention measures with their communities to protect public health.

## Mosquito-borne Diseases

In Vermont, mosquito season starts in the spring, but mosquitoes do not typically pose a health risk until the summer months. By July, some mosquitoes may be carrying West Nile virus (WNV) or eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEE).

WNV and EEE virus can cause illness in people and some animals. WNV has been found in all counties in Vermont. While EEE virus has caused illness in only a few areas of Vermont, illness from EEE virus can be much more severe than WNV.

Find [comprehensive information about mosquito-borne diseases](#), including health alerts and surveillance findings, on our website.

Mosquito surveillance (testing pools—or groups of up to 50 mosquitos of the same species collected from specific locations around the state) for these diseases begins every year in June. THOs can review results for their town/county each week throughout the summer. In addition, the State of Vermont has published an “[Arbovirus Surveillance and Response Plan](#)” online.

The Department of Health can provide language for THOs or other town officials to share through Front Porch Forum, social media, or local newsletters to help THOs educate their communities when a positive mosquito pool is found.

## Tickborne Diseases

Diseases spread by ticks continue to be a serious public health concern in Vermont. Some ticks in Vermont carry pathogens that cause illnesses like Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, *Borrelia miyamotoi* disease, babesiosis, and Powassan virus. Lyme disease and anaplasmosis are the most common tickborne diseases in our state. Fourteen different species of ticks have been identified in Vermont, but the blacklegged tick (also known as the deer tick) is responsible for transmitting all reported tickborne disease cases in the state. [Information about tick activity in Vermont](#) is available online.

[Be Tick Smart educational materials](#), including flyers and brochures, are available to order online.

[The Vermont Tick Tracker](#) is an online tool that anyone can use to report tick sightings and help monitor tick activity in Vermont.

### KEY POINTS

- **THOs can help prevent mosquito- and tick-borne diseases by sharing vector-surveillance information and evidence-based prevention measures with their communities.**
- **THOs can share the Health Department’s educational materials in their communities.**

The best way to prevent tickborne disease is to prevent tick bites. People can reduce their risk of getting tickborne disease by:

- Staying away from places where ticks are commonly found (wooded areas, tall grass, areas where lawns meet wooded areas).
- Using EPA-registered tick repellents.
- Doing daily tick checks and quickly removing attached ticks with tweezers.
- Bathing within 2 hours of returning indoors.
- Putting clothes in the dryer on high heat for 10 minutes after returning indoors.
- Consulting with a veterinarian on how to prevent tick bites in pets.
- Reducing tick habitat through yard management using [tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

### Other Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks

If there is an infectious disease concern or outbreak in a community, THOs can find information on a specific topic online at: [healthvermont.gov/disease-control](http://healthvermont.gov/disease-control).

### Contacts and Additional Resources:

Please contact an Infectious Disease Epidemiologist at 802-863-7240 or toll-free at 800-640-4374 with questions.