

The Role of Local Environmental Health Departments in Tick-Related Activities and Services: Key Findings

THE LANDSCAPE

- Local environmental health (EH) professionals are commonly involved in passive tick surveillance and community education and outreach but are less likely to be involved in tick control and management.
- Local EH professionals utilize resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, state health departments, and local universities to answer tick-related questions.
- Local EH professionals find it useful to partner both internally and externally for tick-related activities. Partnerships increase capacity to conduct tick-related activities such as public outreach, surveillance, control, and management.
- Local EH professionals are aware of current and emerging tick issues in their jurisdiction. Lyme disease is the top concern for many respondents.

CHALLENGES

- Local EH professionals face barriers to performing tick-related activities, including lack of direct funding and staff. In some jurisdictions, the public, upper-level management/board of health, and medical community are unaware that ticks are an issue.
- Uniform training is not available for local EH professionals that conduct tick-related activities.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Routine tick surveillance, even on a small scale, can establish baselines and provide insight into trends.
- EH professionals can use a community health improvement plan to identify ticks as a priority for their community and help justify resourcing tick-related activities.
- Engaging constituents in decisions and development of tick-related policy can provide understanding into community concerns and priorities.
- Additional training and resources would be helpful for local EH professionals performing tick-related activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The information collected as part of the key informant interviews represents a novel contribution to the knowledge base on how local EH professionals are conducting tick surveillance and control activities across the country. This effort provides valuable information on the strategies, challenges, and needs related to tick surveillance and control activities present in local EH departments.

Respondents shared the strategies they use to conduct tick-related activities and to maximize resources by collaborating with internal and external partners. However, local EH professionals struggle with performing tick-related activities due to barriers such as funding and staff constraints. A more comprehensive understanding of tick surveillance and control activities in the U.S. is necessary to further identify needs and gaps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NACCHO, federal agencies, and other national organizations can assist local EH professionals in performing and enhancing tick-related activities through providing:

- Tools and resources for tick education and outreach to the public, local media, upper-level management/Boards of Health, and medical community to help elevate community awareness of local tick issues;
- Recommendations on uniform core tick competencies and recommended trainings for local EH professionals;
- Resources to local EH professionals on how to form partnerships with internal and external collaborators for tick-related activities;

- Sustainable funding and resources dedicated to local vector programs to maintain properly trained staff and adequate supplies;
- Guidance for local EH professionals on how to start a local tick program; and
- Additional tick training and resources that would aid and enhance local EH professional tick-related activities.



Want to learn more? View the full assessment report [here](#).