

Solving Our Deer Tick Problem...

NANTUCKET IS FACING A public health crisis. We lead the nation in deer tick infestation. And that means unprecedented levels of debilitating diseases like...Lyme disease, Babesiosis and Erlichiosis. We all know it. We all know what causes it. And we all know how to stop it. But somehow we can't agree to take any meaningful corrective actions. So instead, we just publish folders on how to inspect ourselves for deer ticks and what to do once we're bitten.

In our 2004 TNCA Voting Member Survey, 47.2% of you named "our deer population" as the Tom Nevers problem you'd most like to see fixed. So to help us find the best solution, we've explored several options...and have a firm recommendation for you to consider.

But before solutions, let's step back a moment to scope out the size of the problem island-wide. Currently, we have 50 deer per sq. mile (that's at least 3-times the mainland density). And our incidence of Lyme disease is 36-times the state average...and 104-times the national average. Face it... we live in a Deer Tick Habitat.

There's solid proof that reducing the number of deer will reduce the incidence of tick-borne diseases. And a first good step would be culling our current deer herd back to no more than 25 per sq. mile...which is still more than twice the mainland density.

But even if we did that, we'd still have a major deer problem in Tom Nevers. Whitetail deer tend to be territorial, and in Tom Nevers we've given them a safe haven. Even an expanded hunting season will do little to reduce their numbers in our neighborhood, because we remain largely closed to all hunting.

Is there any innovative solution that we all can agree on? One that's humane, and effective, and safe for our neighborhood? Review the five options to the right, and you'll see that just one stands out as our best answer

an Expanded Bowhunting Program.

Here are the available choices—

Option #1—Insecticide Baiting...Used in the Fall when adult female deer ticks are having their final meal and laying their eggs. Requires multiple feeding stations, each baited with 2 tons of treated corn. Downside—the insecticide harms the deer and the corn attracts huge rats. Still in testing, the State has not yet approved.

Option #2—Birth Control...Requires dart injecting female deer twice each year with a contraceptive vaccine. Downside—not realistic in an area with heavy foliage, where consistent tracking and tagging of treated deer on an ongoing basis is virtually impossible. Semi-annual cost for manpower and vaccine can be expensive.

Option #3—Hired Sharpshooters...A professional herd management team is brought in to thin out the deer to the desired level. Downside—upsetting to many residents. Requires special State approval. At \$500/deer, fees could run to \$600,000+ just to bring our deer herd down to the statewide average.

Option #4—Extended Hunting Season...Time will tell if this year's February "second season" is effective. Downside—weather and other factors may limit participation and yield. (In February, most doe are pregnant, repulsing some hunters.) Tom Nevers receives little benefit because most of our properties are off-limits to hunters.

Option #5—Expanded Bowhunting Program—Unobtrusive and non-threatening (no upsetting gunfire and no orange jacketed shooters.). Particularly effective in culling deer on small developed properties. Already has State approved for a long Fall hunting season. No limit on the number of deer

that can be taken. A low \$5/head taking fee applies. Downside—Still requires the permission of the property-owner in most of Tom Nevers.

What's Needed To Permit Bowhunting in Tom Nevers?

Just give a bowhunter permission to hunt on your property. Your verbal permission is OK, but your written permission is better. State law prohibits bow or gun hunting within 150-feet of a hard surfaced road (no exceptions) and within 500-feet of an occupied dwelling (unless the owner gives permission.) But with your permission, a bowhunter can be invited to hunt right from your yard or deck.

If you think bowhunting might help you solve your deer problem and would like to consider giving your permission to a responsible bowhunter, let us know at "acktnca@comcast.net". ❖

