



**THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND BOROUGH PRESIDENT ODDO ANNOUNCE NEW TICK
CONTROL INITIATIVE ON STATEN ISLAND**

Enhanced surveillance, outreach and control measures part of plan aimed at reducing cases of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases on Staten Island and other parts of the city

STATEN ISLAND—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Borough President Jimmy today announced a new initiative that will enhance tick surveillance, outreach and control measures on Staten Island to reduce the risk of Lyme and other diseases that are acquired from tick bites. The City will increase spending by approximately \$600,000 a year.

“We understand how serious Lyme disease can be, and while we’re seeing cases level off, even one case is one too many,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “Today we’re committing to doubling down on our efforts and our focus on Staten Island, where we know this disease is of particular concern. We hope New Yorkers join us and do their due diligence to keep themselves safe.”

“Since we got to Borough Hall in 2014, my team and I have spent a great deal of time focused on ticks and Lyme disease,” said **Staten Island Borough President Jimmy Oddo**. “We do so not because we are alarmists, but because we understand the serious medical effects of the disease, the troubling trends indicated by the local data, and how all of this ultimately impacts Staten Islanders. We need to continue to educate the public about Lyme and other tick-borne diseases; we need to aggressively work with physicians to ensure the accurate reporting of these diseases, so that we have a proper understanding of their incidence; and we need to begin a targeted reduction of the tick population, including the use of mouse bait stations. We discussed this latter tool in depth with our friend Dr. Richard Ostfeldt, who has been doing impactful research on ticks, during our visit with him a few months ago at the Cary Institute of Ecosystems Studies. It is for these reasons that Mayor de Blasio, DOH Commissioner Bassett and I are so thoroughly pleased with the announcement today of a new tick control initiative on Staten Island. This will include a number of measures, including enhanced surveillance, outreach and other control measures. An increase in spending by approximately \$600,000 a year is a much needed and most welcome commitment on the part of City Hall. Lyme disease is a serious issue, and anyone who

thinks that the worst-case scenario simply involves a prescription for antibiotics is dangerously unaware of Lyme's true medical and societal implications.”

“We want Staten Islanders and all New Yorkers to enjoy our great parks safely. Prevention is the best tool against Lyme disease, but it can be easily treated if detected early. This plan focuses on raising awareness about prevention while controlling the spread of the blacklegged tick, a known vector of the disease,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “The Health Department’s enhanced efforts will increase public education about tick precautions, enhance surveillance for human cases of Lyme disease, and expand monitoring for ticks to more parks, improving our ability to control ticks and prevent Lyme disease.”

The new funding announced today includes:

- **Enhanced Tick Surveillance of City Parks:** The Health Department will double the number of surveillance sites on Staten Island from 14 to 28.
- **Enhanced Surveillance of New Yorkers with Lyme disease, focused on Staten Island:** The Health Department will conduct more detailed case investigations of Lyme disease and work in partnership with NYC Parks and academic institutions to better understand risk factors for infection.
- **Outreach:** Health education and prevention activities on tick-borne diseases will be expanded, increasing awareness and outreach.
- **Tick Control:** Novel methods under consideration for use next spring include bait boxes, which attract mice. Mice are the primary reservoir of the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. Once the mice enter the bait box, they are covered with a small amount of the same active ingredient used to control ticks on pets. The Health Department may also use biological pesticide that uses a fungus found in soil to spray on vegetation where ticks look for hosts such as deer, to feed on.

Similar to national trends, New York City has seen a growing number of tick borne diseases. Most New York City residents are infected outside of the five boroughs, however rates of Lyme disease are higher on Staten Island than in all other boroughs. This new plan will enhance our human Lyme disease case surveillance as well as tick surveillance efforts, and it will focus on controlling the population of the black legged tick, a known vector of the disease which has increased over the past year. This new initiative will allow the Department to define the risk and put measures in place to prevent new cases.

The Health Department is a part of a larger City task force that addresses the impact of deer on Staten Island. The estimated deer population on Staten Island has decreased by 8 percent since 2017. Ninety-four percent of male deer were sterilized as of March 2018 and the third season of the sterilization project will start again in the late summer. The Health Department along with NYC Parks, New York City Fire Department, Department of Transportation and others will host the “Deer Info Fair” on Wednesday which will raise awareness around issues related to deer and will focus on ticks and Lyme disease prevention.

“This new investment is a major step in the fight against Lyme and tick-borne diseases,” said **Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried, Health Committee Chair**. “Increased tick surveillance will help New Yorkers enjoy the summer weather safely in our parks.”

“The steep increase in Lyme disease cases that have originated on Staten Island in the past five years is very troubling, especially since researchers recently found so many ticks in the Mid-Island and the South Shore,” said **Council Minority Leader Steven Matteo**. “I am pleased the City will be doing more to address this problem, and I look forward to looking through the data they collect so we can work together to address its root causes with effective solutions.”

“As more information and conversations are had, we find there are people across all walks of life effected with this disease. Education and outreach have shown to be the best way for people to continue with normal lives. To quote Sir Francis Bacon, knowledge is power, and with this information we can enjoy our outdoor area, public parks, and beaches,” said **Robert C Sabatino Sr, Founder & Executive Director of Lyme Society Inc**.

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