

Broome County Health Department
New York State Senate Lyme and Other Tick-Borne Diseases Subcommittee
Public Hearing
Testimony
August 29, 2017

Background epidemiology

- I have been the communicable disease nurse in Broome County since 1999 so I have an advantage of firsthand experience with Lyme disease trends in our county
- Broome County has a population of about 197,000 to give you some perspective in regards to Lyme disease case counts
- In the early years, up to 2007, when I could reach patients diagnosed with Lyme disease, they had all reported travel to areas already known to be endemic for Lyme Disease
- Our numbers were low, averaging about 4 cases per year
- At the end of 2007 I interviewed the first person who denied any travel outside of Broome County and I knew that at that point, that we had infected ticks in our county
- Our case counts starting in 2008 went up to around 22 per year
- NYSDOH did testing of ticks in our state park in 2009 which determined that we had an infection rate of approximately 30%, making us an endemic county
- By 2011 we almost tripled our count, and in 2013 we more than tripled our case count
- 2016 was our highest year yet with an estimated case count of almost 300
- We still have minimal reporting of other TBDs in Broome County
- Since 1999 we have had a total of 9 RMSF cases, 6 Ehrlichiosis cases, 3 Babesiosis cases, and no Anaplasmosis or Powassan cases
- It is likely that at some point we will be seeing increases in these diseases as well

BCHD Response

- Our distribution of tick removal kits has been our most successful outreach effort in Broome County
- These kits have educational materials, tweezers and instructions to remove ticks – currently it costs us about \$1.00 per kit
- We distributed 5100 tick removal kits in 2017 in a variety of ways
- In 2017 we started using Facebook to get our message out about TBDs and prevention
- We used targeted messaging to well-established Facebook groups, such as “Mommy and Me” who were very interested in our materials, and with one message we could reach over 2000 members of that group

Collaboration

- Within BCHD, there is great collaboration between the Communicable Disease nurse and Environmental Health staff which allows us to educate both the medical community and general public as efficiently as possible

- We have partnered with numerous organizations such as Binghamton University, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Broome County Parks Department to make Lyme disease prevention information readily available to the public

Annual Lyme disease conference

- We have found the annual Lyme disease conference useful for both up to date training as well as collaboration with other local health departments – we can learn a lot from each other
- Also face to face with NYSDOH representatives allows county health department staff to give feedback on any proposed changes in reporting procedures

Reducing the burden on local health departments

- More funding to NYSDOH so that they will always have educational material in stock
- Funding specifically for tick kits
- Funding for staffing at the local or regional level to help with communicable disease follow-up