

Boost Your Rental Knowledge

A training on the basics of landlord and tenant law was presented recently. The Vermont Department of Health partnered with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to host the training by Vermont Tenants with the Champlain Valley Office for Economic Opportunity and the Vermont Apartment Owners Association. Often Town Health Officers find themselves in the middle of a difficult dispute between a renter and a property owner and what began as a simple rental inspection quickly turns into something much bigger.

Town Health Officers should only address public health concerns and can call upon local fire safety authorities, zoning administrators, or even law enforcement whenever assistance might be needed. Having a basic understanding of rental laws in Vermont can help Town Health Officers clearly stick to their role in enforcing public health laws and regulations. Here are some helpful tips from the training:

- A Town Health Officer can inspect a property at the request and consent of the tenant or at the request of the property owner if he or she has provided 48 hour notice to the tenant. The property owner does not need to be present for an inspection but sometimes it can be helpful to do a walkthrough to point out specific repairs.
- Any inspection report should be copied and provided to both the tenant and the property owner.
- A Town Health Officer should not make determinations about who was "right or wrong" in a situation. The best practice is to stick with enforcing the Rental Housing Health Code.
- A Town Health Officer should not attempt to give legal advice to either the tenant or the property owner including making any suggestions regarding the withholding of rent or the eviction of a tenant.
- Property owners must make repairs and come into compliance with the Rental Housing Health Code regardless of whether the current tenant is paying rent.
- Tenants are protected from illegal retaliation for reporting violations to Town Health Officers, Fire Safety Inspectors, and Municipal Code Enforcement. Keep in mind you may be asked to provide records or testimony regarding the timing and nature of a complaint you received from a tenant.

Finally, a Town Health Officer can always refer a tenant or property owner to these organizations for assistance:

Vermont Tenants
Champlain Valley of Economic Opportunity
1-802-864-0099
1-800-287-7971
www.cvoeo.org

Vermont Apartment Owners Services, LLC
1-802-985-2764
1-888-569-7368
www.vtlandlord.com

Rule Update Notice

The Vermont Department of Health has proposed changes to the Rental Housing Health Code to accommodate the legal requirements discussed in the last issue of the Town Health Officer newsletter concerning the Universal Recycling Law (10 V.S.A. ch. 159). The Rule is open for public comment and comments are due to the department by July 27th. To read a copy of proposed changes to the rule and to learn how to submit comments please go to the website: www.healthvermont.gov/admin/public_comment.aspx

Health Department Local Offices

Barre 479-4200	Middlebury 388-4644	St. Albans 524-7970
Bennington 447-3531	Morrisville 888-7447	St. Johnsbury 748-5151
Brattleboro 257-2880	Newport 334-6707	Springfield 885-5778
Burlington 863-7323	Rutland 786-5811	White River Jct. 295-8820

Vermont Department of Health

P.O. Box 70 • 108 Cherry Street • Burlington, VT 05402

Health Officer Hotline:

1-800-439-8550

Town Health Officer News

Environmental Health News

Summer 2015

Cyanobacteria Monitor Training Opportunities

Starting this July, routine sampling will be conducted at 20 public water supplies located on Lake Champlain. Weekly samples of drinking water will be tested at the Vermont Department of Health Lab for the presence of cyanotoxins.

Testing results will be posted on the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division website: drinkingwater.vt.gov/.

Since 2003 the Lake Champlain Committee (LCC) has coordinated a volunteer cyanobacteria monitoring program in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Health to visually monitor designated locations along the lake's shoreline. LCC has expanded the program this year to train more individuals to identify blooms and gather water quality information from a broader geographic area. Additional

information about the monitoring program can be found at: www.lakechamplaincommittee.org/get-involved/volunteers/bgamonitors/.

Town Health Officer involvement in the monitoring program would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested, please contact Andy Chevrefils of the Vermont Department of Health at: **802-951-0114** or andrew.chevrefils@state.vt.us.

Current conditions and updates at monitored sites can be found at the Vermont Department of Health Blue Green Algae Tracker Map: apps.health.vermont.gov/gis/vttracking/BlueGreenAlgae.

Weekly email updates on current conditions are also provided by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. To be added to the distribution list please contact the Environmental Health Division **1-800-439-8550**.

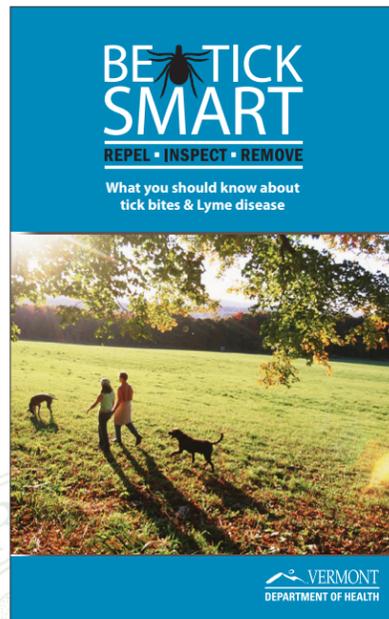


Ticks and Mosquitoes

After the frigid cold of this past winter, humans weren't the only creatures excited for the warmth of spring and summer. Ticks and mosquitos are out in abundance and they can spread Lyme disease and West Nile virus (WNV) or eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) virus. Preventing bites from these critters is among the best ways to prevent illness. The Health Department has created a variety of educational materials that you can easily access and provide to your community.

Ticks

Vermont has one of the highest rates of Lyme disease in the country. Estimates in the state show that around 50 percent of the deer tick population in the state may carry *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. Town Health Officers can order an informative booklet called "Be Tick Smart," as well as tick identification cards on the Health Department website at www.healthvermont.gov/prevent/zoootic/tickborne/Tickborne_diseases.aspx. All materials are free of charge. In addition, there are several factsheets and flyers that can be easily downloaded and printed. Please post this information in places that are frequently visited, such as your town hall offices, general store, library, etc.



Mosquitoes

In Vermont, publically managed mosquito survey and control is done by two approaches, either by municipal mosquito control districts, or by a joint effort of the state Health Department and the Agency of Agriculture. These programs are distinguished by their scope and the type of mosquitoes they address.

Nuisance mosquitoes (those that typically do not carry human or animal diseases) are managed at the local level by the municipal mosquito control districts. Currently, there are two districts operating in southern Addison and northern Rutland counties. Their focus is on surveying and controlling mosquitoes in wetlands, swampy areas, and floodplains along the Otter Creek and Lemon Fair River and in the Lake Dunmore/Fern Lake area.

Activities in the municipal mosquito control districts focus on identification and control of two floodplain nuisance mosquito species. Control of these mosquitoes is accomplished by applying products to floodwaters during the first stages of mosquito larval development. By controlling nuisance mosquitoes during the larval stage, when the insects are concentrated and before they begin flying (and biting), maximizes control while hopefully minimizing the use of adulticide in and around populated areas. The larval control products used (generally *Bacillus thuringiensis* or *B. sphaericus* bacterial based insecticides) are effective only on mosquito larva and have no effect on other aquatic or terrestrial insect species (e.g. dragonflies, beetles, mayflies, bees, and various pollinators).

One of the municipal mosquito control districts, operating in and around the Brandon and Lake Dunmore area, also provides adult mosquito control services. This program, which has been in place for decades, has traditionally focused on short-term control of adult nuisance mosquitoes using truck-mounted spray equipment. While the products used in this program are extremely effective in eliminating adult mosquitoes, the range of application is limited to a swath of a few hundred feet around the truck and treatment does not provide protection for more than a few days. There are other considerations that may limit the efficacy of this approach, including wind and weather, effects of the pesticide on non-target organisms, and public concerns about pesticide use in residential and commercial areas.

Independently, the State of Vermont conducts survey activities statewide specifically for disease presence in vector mosquito species (arboviruses). Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus (WNV) are the primary human diseases targeted by this survey and control effort, jointly implemented by the Department of Health and the Agency of Agriculture. Survey and identification efforts in this vector management program have been ongoing in the Otter Creek basin since the early 1990s and have recently expanded to include vector mosquito breeding and emergence areas statewide. Although detections of EEE and WNV generally occur later in the summer (July through late August), the vector survey program is active from late April through mid-September, when evening temperatures start to consistently dip below 50 degrees.

In the event disease is detected in mosquitoes, response activities are dictated by the statewide Arbovirus response plan, which is available on the Department of Health website www.healthvermont.gov/prevent/arbovirus/surveillance/index.aspx.

In the event an imminent threat to public health is declared by the Commissioner of Health, the State may respond by conducting aerial adulticide treatment to reduce the abundance of adult vector mosquitoes. Limited aerial treatment was done in 2012 and 2013 in Rutland and Addison counties, in response to EEE detections in humans and mosquitoes. There was no aerial treatment in 2014.

The best protection from arboviruses is preventing exposure to bites. The Department recommends using insect repellent, ensuring your window screens are in good repair, and when possible, avoiding outdoor activities when mosquitoes are most active. More information and details of how best to avoid personal exposure to biting adult mosquitoes is available online, as are the State's arbovirus response matrix (Vermont Department of Health Recommendations – www.healthvermont.gov/prevent/arbovirus/documents/eee_risk_personal_protection_measures_matrix.pdf)

State sample results are posted on the Health Department website, which may be useful in personal decision-making.

The survey and control of mosquitoes is a complex and long-term project, and frequently a source of confusion and anxiety for the public. Understanding the nature of the problem and how the different programs interact to provide relief from nuisance mosquitoes and protection from vector species can be difficult. Anyone with questions about the various aspects of these efforts is welcome to contact the Agency of Agriculture, Plant Industry Section at **802-828-2430** for assistance.

Rabies Reminder

Rabies exposure can happen year round, but warmer temperatures make it even easier for people and animals to come into contact. In 2014, approximately 600 animals in Vermont were tested for rabies, 55 of which were found to be infected. This is similar to the numbers from 2013. Rabies control remains an important public health function in Vermont. The Town Health Officer should make sure they receive timely Bite Report Forms from medical providers. The Health Department's website, www.healthvermont.gov (Go to the A-Z guide and click on 'R' for rabies) has useful information about rabies control in Vermont. In addition, the Vermont Rabies Hotline, **1-800 4RABIES (802-223-8697)**, is a good resource to triage rabies calls. Dr. Bob Johnson, the State Public Health Veterinarian, is always available for rabies consultation with Town Health Officers and Animal Control Officers. He can be reached at **1-800-640-4374 or (802-863-7240)**.

Upcoming Trainings

This May the Department of Health and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns held two free trainings for Town Health Officers in Burlington and Montpelier. If you were unable to attend either of these, you will have a second chance in the fall when we repeat the courses in the southern part of the state. Specific dates and locations will be sent around later this summer on the list serve. Stay tuned!