

Rhode Island deer tick effort under way

4 November 2005

Thirty tick-killing bait stations have been deployed in Rhode Island for what's believed to be the largest tick control project in the nation.

The bait stations are being used by University of Rhode Island Entomology Professor Thomas Mather and research associate Nathan Miller to kill Lyme disease-carrying deer ticks where they concentrate and are most vulnerable -- on deer.

"Most people only pay attention to ticks in the spring and summer, and they're surprised if they find one at this time of year," said Mather. "But adult ticks are most active in mid-fall and again in early spring, so now is the time to be on the lookout for adult stage deer ticks."

The stations are designed to attract deer to nibble on corn in a trough. To reach the bait, a deer must rub its head and neck on one of four 10-inch posts -- similar to paint rollers -- impregnated with pesticide. Since 90 percent of ticks are found on the heads and necks of deer, the bait station pesticide treatment kills the large majority of ticks.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture-developed device was tested in five states from 1997 to 2002.

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