

Initial Survey of Specialty Crop Producers about Ticks & Bite Prevention Practices in Northern New England

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A survey to gather information about ticks and bite prevention practices was sent to 585 growers who produce or work with specialty crops primarily in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. Of those, 15% responded. Over half (57%) of the respondents were from VT, 33% from NH, 9% from ME and 1% from other states (NY and CT). Respondents' occupations were mixtures of landscapers (31%), greenhouse growers (29%), perennial growers (24%), field vegetable growers (20%), tree nursery growers (17%), fruit growers (8%) and high tunnel growers (8%). 94% indicated that over the past 3 years, they have seen ticks crawling on them or their clothing. Over 71% indicated they had been bitten, whereas 6% were unsure.



A diversity of precautions are used by this group to avoid tick bites. These include performing daily tick checks (82%), wearing long pants/shirts (58%), using spray repellents (48%), tucking pants into socks (22%), wearing treated clothing (12%) or other methods (12%) like washing clothes, showering, essential oils, wearing high boots/gaiters, putting work clothes in the dryer and lacing flea collars through boot/shoes. 5% indicated they do nothing to protect themselves against ticks.

86% of respondents who produce or work with specialty crops consider ticks to be an occupational hazard.

Select comments:

- This is a real challenge for many farmers. Glad you are addressing it!
- Tons of ticks this spring.
- Lots of ticks in spring, early summer.
- They are increasing.
- Introduction of rabbits in recent years and their overpopulation have created a feeding opportunity for field ticks.
- Had anaplasmosis.
- Pressure along the Connecticut River seems worst early spring and later in fall.
- We mow around the fields regularly.
- Several biting deer ticks in the past 2 years
- The last two years I have only had 2 ticks each year. In prior years it had been 3-5 a day.
- It is a severe hazard and one of the most hidden.
- Big personal safety issue.
- They were everywhere in the early spring. Not much when we hit the dry spell.
- Most prevalent on edges of woods and in wooded sites with established understory.
- Most of the ticks I have seen on my person have not been from the farm per se but from tree lines and or brush areas outside of our growing areas.
- Even with hens roaming, ticks seem to find their way onto clothes and attach themselves onto me and my Staff. We do our best. but continue to understand the ramifications of them. and how terrible tick-borne diseases are.
- We are certified organic and don't want to use permethrin to disrupt pollinators. High tunnels and greenhouses attract ticks in early spring because they are warm. Chickens/guinea hens help control ticks.
- For vegetable production the ticks stay in the woods or tall grass spring is the biggest problem.

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