

Let's Go On a Deer Tick Drag Survey !



"This looks like a pretty good place to drag for deer ticks. It's a shady, wooded path with a little stream nearby. Deer ticks are usually found in the woods or along edges of woods."

When Do We Drag?

"We conduct the tick survey from late May to early August, the period of nymph deer tick activity in the Northeast...this corresponds to the highest risk period for unsuspecting humans!"



It's Not Rocket Surgery...



"My field equipment is primitive. I handle a simple broomstick with an attached white flannel flag, hang fine point tweezers around my neck, and keep a vial half filled with moistened plaster handy."

Slow and Steady

"I drag the flag along the ground while I walk slowly, avoiding briars and poison ivy. I wear a white suit and boots to avoid an unwanted tick, but I never use repellent."



Count to Thirty, Again and Again



“Each thirty second drag represents about 100 feet of sampling. Deer ticks hunting on the trail cling to the fabric, along with spiders, beetles, aphids and various ground debris.”

Inspection of the White Flag

"Time's up!

Let's check our flag and look for a deer tick nymph. After a while, even a teeny tiny nymph sort of jumps out at you...they're hard to miss."



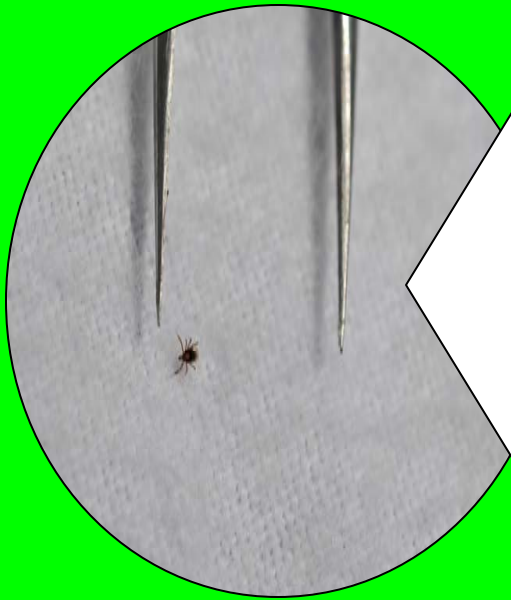
Looking Very Carefully!



"I scan the flag from top to bottom, back and forth, holding the corner with my back to a breeze, fluffing out the miniature sail.

AHA! There's one now!"

Too Small to Even Notice?



"Here's a deer tick nymph on the flag, caught in the fabric, just a tiny dot amid all this fluff. They don't move much, since they are waiting for an animal like a mouse or bird to pass by. This hunting behavior is known the 'questing' tick."

How Can You Identify the Tick?



"The nymph deer tick has eight legs and is dark gray with a light border, but remember, they are poppy seed sized! They are tear drop shaped and move... s-l-o-w-l-y."

Gotcha!

"Now, I very carefully 'ping' the tick into the vial using the tweezers, pushing it through a tiny slit in the stretchy latex top. The moistened plaster in the vial provides a viable environment for the captive tick."



Looky Here...

"With the tick trapped in the vial, I now record it's vital data. These ticks are later checked for infection. About 1 in 5 (20%) have the Lyme disease microbe."



The Real Risk from Ticks

"Year after year, the warning remains the same—it's these tiny nymph ticks, active from May to August that are responsible for most cases of Lyme disease."



Sampling Ticks is a Drag

"Well, that was only my first of thirty more drags along this path—who knows how many more tiny hitchhikers I will find out here?"



Thanks for Coming Along!



"Thanks for stopping by. You know, it gets pretty lonely out here in the woods, with only the company of hungry mosquitoes and deer flies and horse flies and black flies and gnats and ants and bugs..."