



NANTUCKET TOWN ASSOCIATION MARCH MONTHLY MEETING

March 24, 2026, at 4:00 pm

Meeting held by Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Attendance: Members: Peggy Altreuter, Trish Bridier (Zoom), Mary Anne Easley, Doris Hanna (Zoom), Mary Longacre (Zoom), Deborah Newhouse (Zoom), Lee Saperstein, Anne Terry, Barbara von der Grueben, Charley Walters.

Guest: Roque Miramontes, Director, Department of Health & Human Services.

The Zoom link for remote attendance is, as always,
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87455121153>.

1. Call to Order.

Mary Anne Easley, President, started the meeting at 4:00 pm; she announced that the meeting was being recorded and is available at <https://youtu.be/YG4MYOCFUp0>. She reported the sad news that Barbara G. Cohen had died on February 13, 2026. Barbara Cohen was a stalwart member of the Nantucket Town Association, which she served for years as Chair of the Nominations Committee. Her very fine obituary is on line at https://www.ack.net/obituaries/barbara-g-cohen/article_1aebb07d-3ffb-40af-b694-326b14c4a905.html.

2. Approval of the January 27, 2026, Minutes.

Mary Anne Easley noted that the minutes for the January meeting had been distributed and, then, called for a motion of approval, which was made by Anne Terry, seconded by Barbara von der Grueben, and approved unanimously.

3. Treasurer's Report.

Mary Longacre gave the Treasurer's report and said that was a beginning balance of \$3,747.28 and there is a new balance of \$4055.97, resulting from dues receipts and the payment of a \$50 registration fee. She noted that this was the time of year when the Association approved donations to Nantucket non-profit organizations. She then suggested that the Treasurer's Report include a donation of \$500 to the Atheneum in an acknowledgement of their support for the

Association's meetings. There followed suggestions for several other donations, including the Nantucket Food, Fuel, Rental Assistance Program, <https://www.assistnantucket.org/>, and pledges for Our Island Home through the Community Foundation for Nantucket and its Nantucket Fund, <https://cfnan.org/community-foundation-for-nantucket-announces-the-our-island-home-campaign-fund/>.

4. Old Business.

Mary Anne Easley reminded members who had not yet paid their dues that they can do so through the Association's web site by clicking on "Join Now" or by sending a check along with the membership form, <https://www.nantuckettownassociation.org/>.

5. New Business.

Guest Speaker, Roque Miramontes, Director, Department of Health and Human Services.

Mary Anne Easley introduced the meeting's guest speaker, Roque Miramontes, and thanked him for his patience while the association's business was discussed. He went to a computer and began his talk with a slide presentation. The first two slides laid out the mission of the department and gave a capsule summary of its functions. He put a highlight on some of these that most protect Nantucketers' health: food service permitting and inspections, beach water sampling, and vaccine provisions. He then said that he would divide the department's functions into three broad categories: 1) what draws the most questions; 2) what draws the most media attention; and 3) what issue has the potential for the most public impact. He asked the members present if they could arrive at the correct answers to these questions. He also said that the Department responds to all complaints through their complaint form: <https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/formcenter/health-department-45/complaint-form-131>.

Short-term rentals, STR, draw the most questions. In three slides, he showed the regulatory requirements for STRs and emphasized the steps to be taken by a landlord in meeting these rules. Primary among these is the need for sufficient insurance for the dwelling. He shared data on the number of permitted STRs, which are now approaching 1500, and admitted that the data do not show type of ownership or number of rented days, which are gaps that they hope to close.

Media attention is focused on Nantucket's own wastewater surveillance that showed an higher than average incidence of cocaine in the Town's wastewater. He dedicated ten slides to this topic. He began by sharing data on drug fatalities, nineteen over the past ten years. He then spoke to the philosophy behind this surveillance, which is to give an early warning of public health challenges, first of which are infectious diseases such as COVID and influenza. In several slides he compared Nantucket's incidence of infectious diseases and illicit drug use with State-wide averages. In most cases, Nantucket's rates matched the State's. The only outlier was cocaine, which was found in higher-than-average amounts in the wastewater. He then gave an interesting explanation. Cocaine metabolites, which are the elements excreted by a cocaine user, were no higher on Nantucket than elsewhere in the State. This suggests that Nantucket users discarded a lot of their supply directly into the sewer. Another explanation is that the cocaine is consumed along with alcohol, which impacts the generation of the metabolite. Further details

are available from the Wastewater Surveillance page: <https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/3705/Wastewater-Surveillance>. He closed this section by reminding the group that early warning allows for an effective response.

The issue with the greatest future public impact is the Alpha-Gal allergic reaction that comes from a bite by a lone-star tick. These ticks are plentiful on Martha's Vineyard and the allergy has created a huge public response there. Only a small number of lone-star ticks have been found on Nantucket but their population can only increase. The allergy affects the sufferer when the person eats animal protein, red meat in particular, which leads to discomfort and potentially harmful disease. Avoiding tick bites by use of insect repellent sprays is recommended whenever someone goes out into Nantucket's grass lands. Once bitten, strict dietary controls remain the only option. While the possibility exists of a Lyme Disease vaccine in the next few years, there is no such potential for Alpha-Gal.

At this point Roque Miramontes said that it was time for questions. Charley Walters asked about health issues among the homeless and was told that this was a significant issue for Nantucket. Locating homeless people, who are known to sleep in cars, in the woods, at friends houses, and elsewhere, is in itself difficult and then getting them to come in for assessment and treatment is equally difficult. Yes, it is a major problem.

With no other questions, Mary Anne Easley adjourned the meeting at 4:58 pm.

Lee Saperstein, Secretary, 1 April 2026



Health & Human Services Department

The mission of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is to enhance the health and well-being of all Nantucketers, to provide effective health and human services by fostering sound, sustained advances in the sciences underlying medicine, environmental and public health, and social services.

Specific focus areas and responsibilities include monitoring and controlling the spread of disease, providing public health education and outreach programs, and conducting inspections to ensure compliance with health standards. Additionally, the department collaborates with local partners to provide assistance to vulnerable populations through coordination of social services throughout the community.



Health Department Responsibilities

- **Permitting**
 - Restaurants & Food services
 - Summer camps
 - Septic
 - Pools
 - Lodges
 - Tobacco
 - Private wells
- **Inspections**
 - Housing complaints
 - Short-term rentals
 - Beach water sampling
- **Infectious disease surveillance & outbreak investigations**
- **Tick-borne diseases**
- **Vaccines**
- **Environmental health (e.g., PFAS)**
- **Board of Health agent**



Outline



TOPIC THAT GENERATES
THE MOST QUESTIONS



TOPIC WITH THE MOST
MEDIA ATTENTION



TOPIC OF POTENTIALLY
BIGGEST FUTURE PUBLIC
HEALTH IMPACT



4

Topic that Generates the Most Questions

5

Short-term Rentals (STR)



If the rental is more than 31 days or are 14 days or less in a calendar year, the property does not need to be registered with the Town. <https://Nantucket-ma.gov/3337/34443/FAQs-for-Short-term-Rentals>



Properties registered in 2024 expiration date extended to 10/31/2025



All properties intending to rent from 11/1/2025 – 10/31/2026 must have permits renewed by Nov 1st and each year following if they intend to continue to rent.



Chapters 123 and 338 of Town regulations are specific to STRs

Advertisements for STRs must include the operator's certificate (permit) number.

While being rented all STR owners must maintain records for 3 years to include:
• Type of rental, dates and number of nights rented, number of guests, number of vehicles.



Health Dept enforcement plan

Scraping and reaching out to owners believed to be renting without a permit.
Communicating with realtors

6

STR Operator Must Provide

On-site or prior to arrival: contact information for the operator and at least one local designated person; emergency exit diagrams, which also must be posted at the short-term rental premises in all bedrooms and on all egresses; instructions for waste disposal and recycling, including but not limited to the requirement that trash be removed from the premises at each turnover or weekly, whichever comes first; a copy of Nantucket's Noise Bylaw (Chapter 101) and a copy of Nantucket's Outdoor Lighting Bylaw (Chapter 102). Items must be posted centrally in the unit.



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Short-term Rental Data

	1417 current registrations	Independent of state registry
	Available data	Property address Owner address & contact info Number of days intending to rent Evidence of insurance
	Unavailable data	Actual number of rented days • Will collect at renewal Rental plans for the season Corporate or investor ownership

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Topic with the Most Media Attention

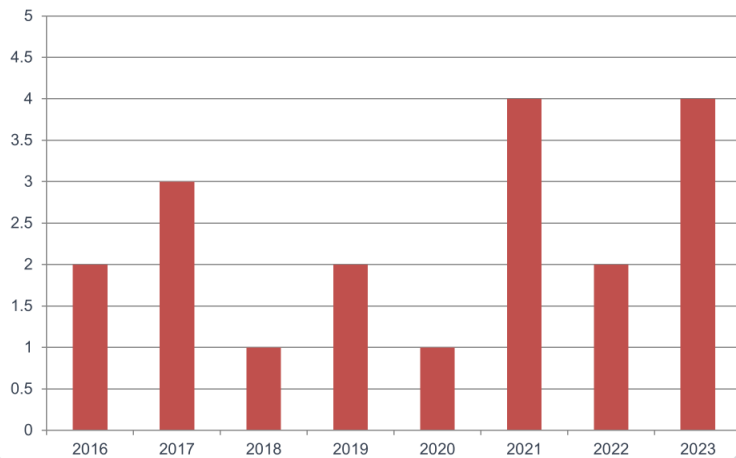
9



Local Context: Overdose Deaths (Nantucket)

Counts are small—but every death is preventable

Reported overdose deaths, 2016–2023



Town of Nantucket • Wastewater Surveillance

10-year snapshot

19
Total deaths

reported on Nantucket
(in the past 10 years)

Why this matters

- Small numbers can hide rapid changes
- Trends can help time outreach and resources
- Data supports partners doing frontline work

Why Wastewater Surveillance?



Public health “early warning”

- Near-real-time trends at the community level
- Complements clinical data and surveys (less bias, faster signals)
- Leverages existing wastewater sampling infrastructure

Image: Deer Island Wastewater Treatment Plant aerial (CC BY 2.0; Doc Searls via Flickr/Wikimedia Commons)

Town of Nantucket • Wastewater Surveillance

Nantucket: building on what works



Proven value for infectious disease

Nantucket has monitored COVID-19 in wastewater for several years, using spikes to inform providers and anticipate trends. The Town recently expanded to influenza and other pathogens.



Addressing overdose risk with better data

Overdose deaths have risen over the past two decades. Wastewater surveillance provides one more tool to support harm reduction, treatment linkage, and prevention.



Seasonal surge, fixed resources

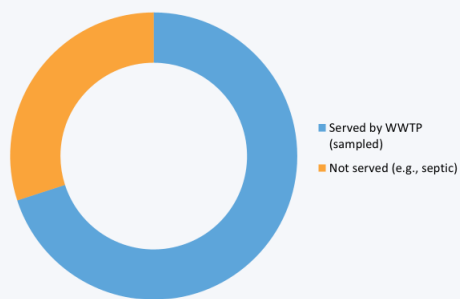
Nantucket's population increases dramatically in summer—yet local behavioral health resources remain limited. Trend data helps partners allocate effort where it's most needed.

Nantucket's Approach

Community-wide trends • Privacy-aware by design

Single sampling point

Nantucket collects one influent sample at the island's wastewater treatment system, serving ~70% of residents. Results are interpreted as island-wide trends (not neighborhood-level).



Town of Nantucket • Wastewater Surveillance

Privacy & ethics guardrails

- Focus on trends, not individuals
- Avoid stigmatizing neighborhoods or schools
- Share results transparently via dashboard + updates

Key takeaway

Because Nantucket uses one centralized sampling location, wastewater data is treated as an island-level public health signal—supporting partners without pinpointing specific areas.

What Nantucket Tests For

High-risk substances + opioids

High-risk substances

- Cocaine
- Methamphetamine
- Fentanyl
- Nicotine
- Xylazine ("tranq")

Illicit opioids / analogs

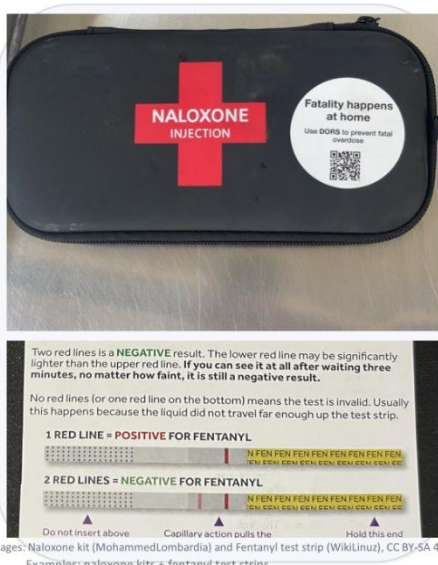
- Acetyl fentanyl
- Carfentanil
- Heroin (and metabolites)
- Sufentanil
- Tianeptine ("gas-station heroin")

Prescription opioids

- Codeine
- Dihydrocodeine
- Hydrocodone
- Hydromorphone
- Morphine
- Oxycodone
- Tramadol

From Signals to Action

How trend data can help partners tailor interventions



Town of Nantucket • Wastewater Surveillance

Intervention buckets



Harm reduction

Expand access to naloxone (Narcan), fentanyl/xylazine test strips, safer-use kits, and low-barrier distribution (e.g., kiosks).



Health access & clinical response

Targeted provider communication and screening guidance (e.g., stimulant-related cardiovascular risk; mental health supports).



Linkage to care & partnerships

Coordinate with behavioral health partners for outreach, peer recovery groups, and referral pathways when trends rise.

Advice for Communities Considering Wastewater Drug Surveillance

1

Start with your wastewater experts

Operators know system coverage, sampling options, and what can realistically be measured.

2

Engage behavioral health partners early

Align on goals, ethical safeguards, and what “actionable” signals look like locally.

3

Build a baseline before making big calls

Establish normal ranges and watch for sustained, meaningful changes.

4

Use the literature and national guidance

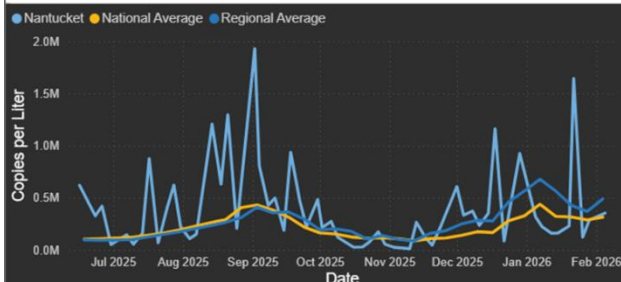
CDC resources and academic/public health partners can help with design and interpretation.

Tip: Keep communications stigma-aware—frame results as public health indicators and pair them with pathways to support.

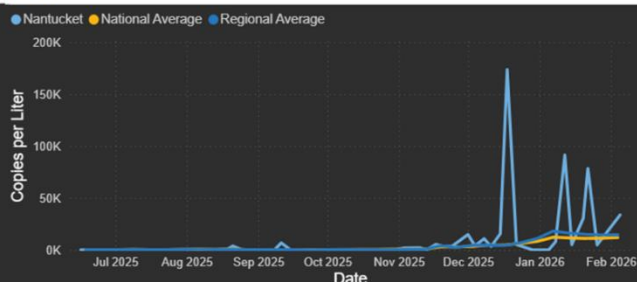
Town of Nantucket • Wastewater Surveillance

Nantucket Wastewater Respiratory Illness Surveillance

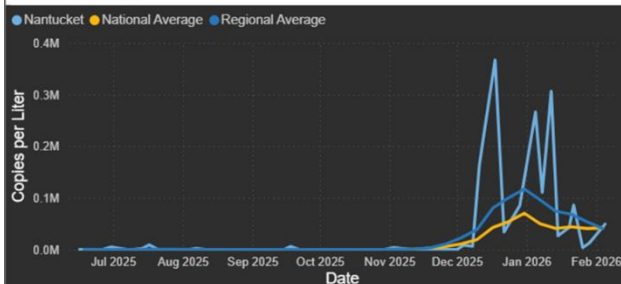
COVID-19



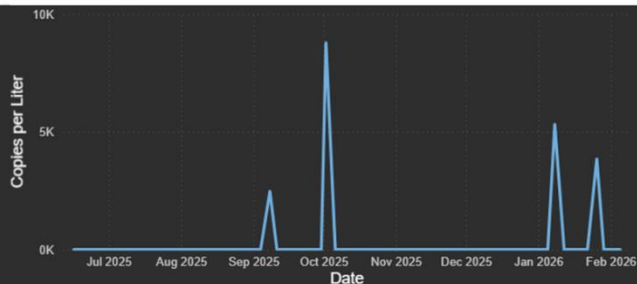
RSV

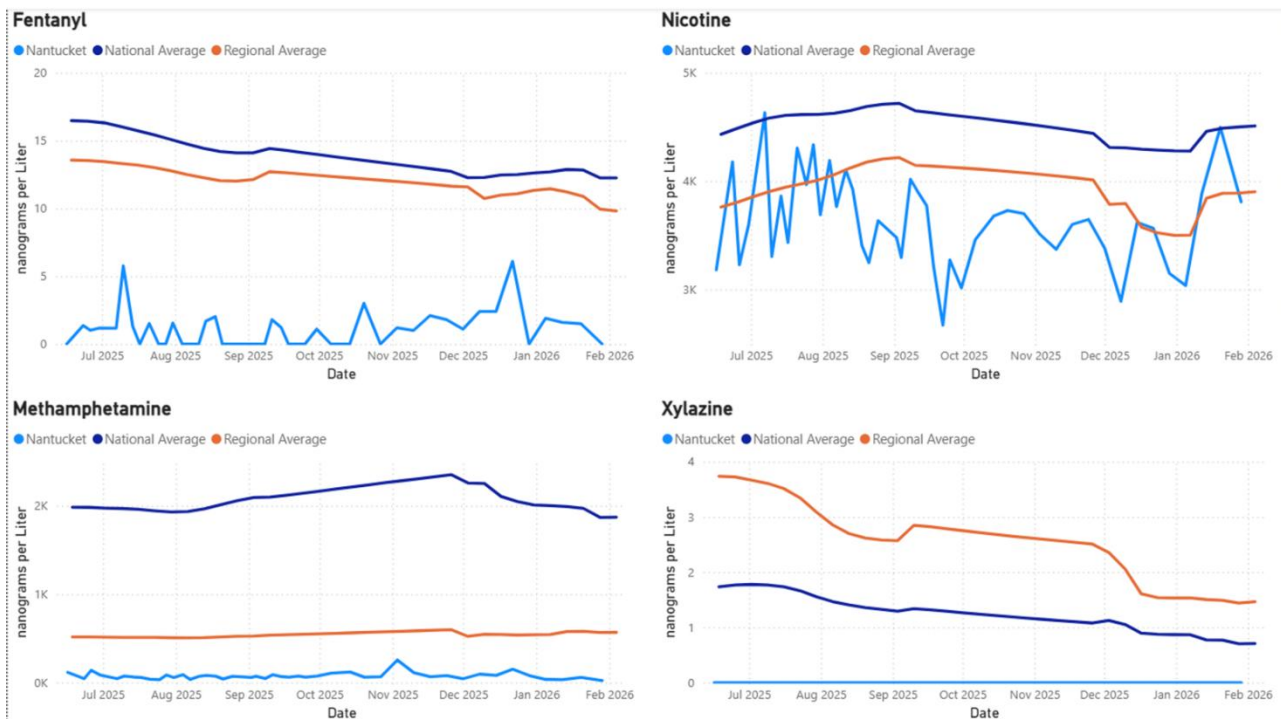


Influenza A



Influenza B

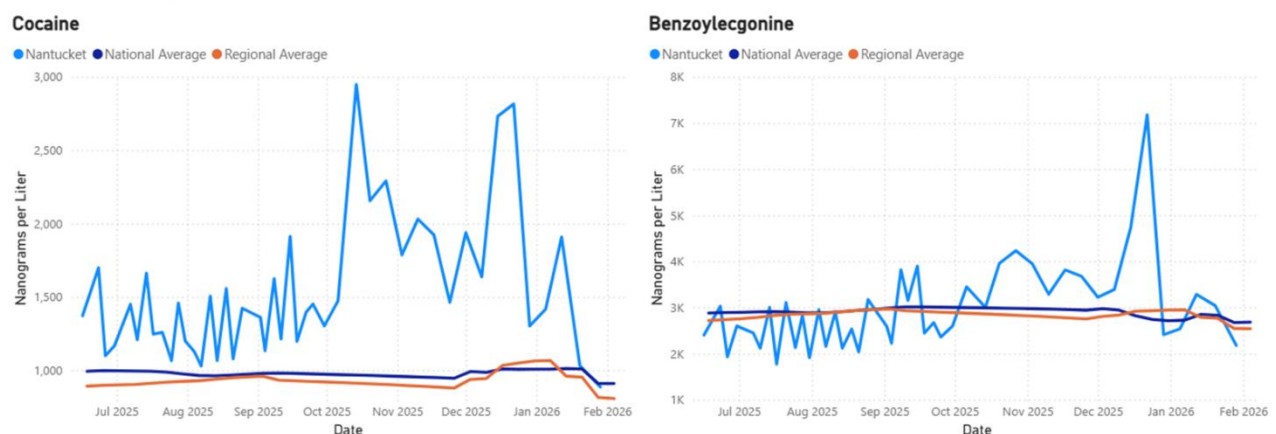




Cocaine and its primary metabolite, benzoylecgonine (BZE), normally trend together in wastewater data because the body converts most consumed cocaine into BZE before excretion. When cocaine levels rise without a corresponding increase in BZE, it signals that some portion of the cocaine entering the sewer system did not come from typical human metabolism. This pattern often appears when unconsumed cocaine is dumped or disposed of into the wastewater system, creating a spike in cocaine that is not reflected in BZE.

Because Nantucket's cocaine levels are above national and regional averages while BZE is often at or below average, the most likely explanations include dumping events, repeated small-scale disposal, or concurrent use with alcohol, which changes how cocaine is metabolized and reduces BZE formation.

Note: Results represent normalized rather than raw concentrations



Topic of Potentially Biggest Public Health Impact

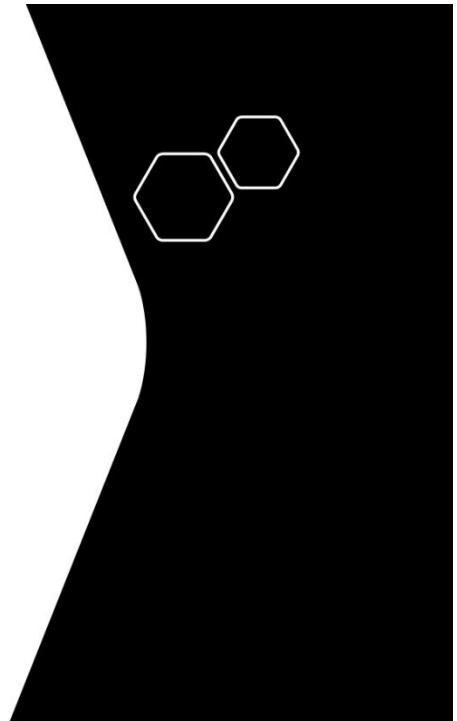
VINEYARD  GAZETTE



Telltale spot identifies a female lone star tick. Ray Ewing

Alpha-Gal Cases Skyrocket as Lone Star Ticks Dig in

Ethan Genter Thursday, October 31, 2024 - 4:20pm



Alpha gal Syndrome

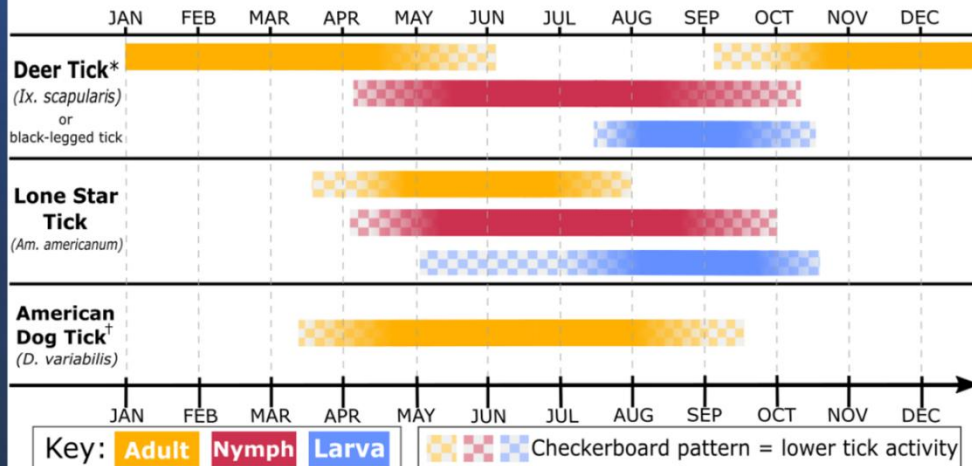
- **Cause:** Allergic reaction to the carbohydrate galactose- α -1,3-galactose (alpha-gal), typically triggered by bites from the Lone Star tick in the United States.
- **What Triggers It:** Red meat (beef, pork, lamb), organ meats, and sometimes dairy or gelatin-containing products.
- **Unique Feature:** Delayed allergic reaction — symptoms usually occur 3–6 hours after eating mammalian meat.
- **Symptoms:** Hives, swelling, gastrointestinal distress, difficulty breathing, and in severe cases, anaphylaxis.
- **Management:** Avoidance of trigger foods/products, carrying an epinephrine auto-injector, and tick bite prevention.

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Collected at the Milestone Connector Between Old South Rd. and Milestone Rd.



Tick Bite Risk is Year-Round; Highest in Spring to Fall



*Deer tick adults will be active when temperatures are above 40°F.

†Only the adult life stage of the American Dog Tick is known to bite humans.

Compiled by P. Roden-Reynolds for IIPHEC & MV Tick Program 02/2024
Adapted from "Ticks and Tick-borne Diseases of Virginia" flyer. Virginia Department of Health



Thank you

Questions & discussion

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Photo: "Nantucket Harbor" by Don Ramey Logan (CC BY-SA 4.0)