

**January 22, 2013**

**2012 Deer Management Report  
Lyme Disease Committee of the Dover Board of Health**

**Deer Hunt on Dover Open Town Land and private properties - 2013**

The third annual deer hunt by experienced, volunteer, bow hunters on Dover Open Town Land and some private properties has been successfully implemented and completed. Directed by the Lyme Disease Committee of the Dover Board of Health this program was held during the MA State Hunting Season (October 18<sup>th</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012). Hunting hours began ½ hour before sunrise and closed ½ hour after sunset on Monday through Saturday with no hunting on Sunday. Hunting was not permitted within 150 feet of roads or 500 feet of buildings or dwellings. Hunting was only from fixed tree stands placed away from marked trails. The tree stands are removed after the end of hunting season. There was extensive signage on trails and entrances to the selected properties.

All hunters were authorized by the Board of Health and underwent extensive qualifying interviews by Deer Management Agents (DMA) of the Lyme Disease Committee as well as a background check by the Dover Police Department. Authorized hunters were required to carry Board of Health identification cards on their person, displayed on the dashboard of their car and on their tree stand. A total of 58 qualified bow hunters participated in the 2012 program.

The DMAs were informed by the hunters within 48 hours as to the location, date and time of all deer taken. A complete listing was maintained by the DMAs and the Board of Health. As of December 31, 2012, a total of 29 deer were culled - 18 does and 11 bucks. No injuries and/or complaints were reported to the Police Department, the Board of Health, or the DMAs. One letter of concern about hunting as too close to property and one letter of appreciation were received by the Board of Health. One illegal tree stand was removed.

It should be noted that based on substantial research over the last several years, two surveys of town residents, and a Lyme Disease Forum, the Board of Health declared Lyme Disease a health threat to the town's residents. Black-legged ticks, often infected with Lyme and other tick-borne diseases as a result of first feeding on mouse blood, prefer the white-tailed deer when seeking a larger host. The more deer there are, the higher the chances of tick-borne diseases spreading to humans.

In order to manage this health threat, the Board of Health-Lyme Disease Committee implemented a three-pronged approach over the last several years:

1. Continuous education of adults and school children about the means of personal protection from tick bites. Current efforts include distribution of materials such as tick cards and instructions on the town website [doverma.org](http://doverma.org) (Lyme Disease Advisory) and school information channels.

2. Continuous education of residents and organizations how to create tick-safe zones on private and recreational properties in Dover by distribution of materials and instructions on the town website.
3. Responsible management of the deer population via progressive reduction of deer density through a strictly regulated and monitored deer hunting on Open Town Land and Spaces as well as private properties joined to this effort.

As stated previously, the Dover hunting project is based on Mass Wildlife (MWL) experience and guidance together with Dover-specific rules and regulations. With potential collaboration with adjacent towns our program could be developed into a regional program. Dover is located in Zone 10 of MWL with one of the highest incidence rates of Lyme Disease in the state and a deer population of 25-30/square mile of forested land. A healthy deer population density is considered 6-8 deer /square mile.

The Dover Board of Health-Lyme Disease Committee believe that a controlled hunt to progressively reduce Dover deer density to a healthy and reasonable deer population will:

- Reduce deer tick density with a concomitant reduction of the incidence of Lyme Disease
- Reduce vehicle-deer collisions
- Provide a healthy ecological balance of natural and man-made vegetation
- Provide for a healthy deer population