

For Immediate Release
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**Tick Control Awareness Day
proclaimed in Rhode Island June 3**
URI tick expert to host numerous statewide events

KINGSTON, R.I. – May 1, 2006 -- Rhode Island Governor Donald Carcieri recently signed a proclamation declaring June 3 as Tick Control Awareness Day in the state, and a team of University of Rhode Island tick experts is planning a series of events on that date aimed at educating the public about ways to prevent deer tick bites and Lyme disease.

“Rhode Islanders are infected by Lyme disease at 25 times the national average, and numerous communities in the state are looking for help in trying to reduce tick numbers,” said Entomology Professor Thomas Mather, director of the URI Center for Vector-Borne Disease. “I hope that Tick Control Awareness Day will focus attention on this increasing problem and convince residents of the need for taking action to prevent Lyme disease.”

Mather met with government officials in recent months, and State Representatives David Caprio and Matthew McHugh brought a request to Governor Carcieri asking him to initiate a tick control campaign. “If there aren’t any ticks, they won’t bite us,” Mather said.

“Rhode Islanders, especially those living in the southern part of the state, have had a long history with disease-transmitting ticks,” explained Caprio. “It is definitely time to take some preventative action against tick-borne disease, and I am happy to work with Dr. Mather and his team at URI to focus attention on reducing the significant impact of ticks on the lives of our citizens and the economy.”

Mather and his outreach coordinator, Nate Miller, are working to schedule a diverse array of public activities on June 3, including educational displays at retail establishments, tick control demonstrations, and community workshops on effective tick control methods, and they are creating a website to provide tick control information and resources. The scientists have requested legislative funding assistance for these activities

from a legislative coalition headed by State Representative John Patrick Shanley, Jr.

The first tick control workshop will be held prior to Tick Control Awareness Day on May 13 at the East Farm Spring Festival in Kingston.

Mather said that 2005 was a record high year for tick abundance across the state of Rhode Island. “It was actually an average year for tick numbers in southern Rhode Island, which historically has the highest number of ticks in the state, but ticks became somewhat more evenly distributed throughout the state last year.”

The URI scientist’s research over the past 13 years has indicated that the greatest determinant of how severe the tick problem will be in a given year is the amount of rain that falls in June and July. When moisture is low in those months, tick numbers are usually low.

“It’s been a dry winter and spring, but that doesn’t necessarily mean we’ll have a dry summer and few ticks,” Mather said. “We’ll just have to wait and see what the weather brings in June.”