



**HOUSATONIC VALLEY
COUNCIL OF ELECTED OFFICIALS**
OLD BROOKFIELD TOWN HALL
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Senator Edward Meyer
Chair of the Environment Committee
State Capitol, 210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

March 6, 2008

Dear Senator Meyer:

I am writing to you to convey the views of the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO), comprised of the chief elected officials of Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Redding, Ridgefield and Sherman.

The HVCEO supports **Bill No. 5852, An Act Concerning the Control of Lyme Disease.**

We must all face the fact that many Connecticut municipalities have been badly affected by deer overpopulation. Many of us are struggling with the issue of how best to alleviate the consequences of excess deer and some of us are trying to implement deer population control programs.

The State has effectively promoted the aggressive control of mosquito populations in order to combat West Nile Disease, but has failed to exert an equivalent effort to control deer populations in order to combat Lyme Disease.

This far more serious vector transmitted infection has severe short term and long term consequences for those who contract it. Difficult to diagnose, untreated Lyme Disease can cause chronic and disabling neurological damage.

We feel that a lack of factual information in the public realm is handicapping this effort, which is frustrating knowing that useful scientific studies have been performed and their results could be more widely distributed on a statewide level. **Bill No. 5852 provides a clear solution.**

While the CT Department of Environmental Protection has made excellent progress in responding to the terrible increase in deer numbers over the last 30 years, they are struggling to make any real inroads. Lack of access to increasingly subdivided and privately owned land is one significant hurdle.

The Chief of Wildlife feels that this is due to lack of public understanding of the need to reduce the deer herd significantly. Public attitudes to hunters are still focused on sport and they have yet to see hunters as our partners in the battle against Lyme Disease and woodland destruction.


The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) statistics indicate approximately 56,000 new cases of physician confirmed Lyme Disease in Connecticut in 2005. Public health is perhaps the most important reason to want to get deer numbers under control but DEP feels they are not qualified to take on the role of public health educators- that should be the role of DPH.

So here we have a dilemma: DPH regards deer as the province of the DEP, despite the fact that deer are the critical animal hosts to the tick vector that spreads the disease to humans, and DEP regards health education as the province of the DPH.

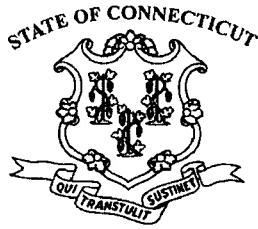
However, if the state would set a policy direction and recommend that these two agencies work together on getting more information out to the public and perhaps setting a tick borne disease prevention goal to be implemented by DEP, then DEP could do a much more effective job at helping our communities avoid all the diseases spread by deer ticks.

Your favorable action on Bill No. 5852 would be appreciated. Thank you for your time and attention in this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Jonathan Chew,
Executive Director



General Assembly

February Session, 2008

Raised Bill No. 5852

LCO No. 2839

02839 _____ ENV

Referred to Committee on Environment

Introduced by:
(ENV)

AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONTROL OF LYME DISEASE.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of
2 Environmental Protection, in consultation with the Commissioner of
3 Public Health, shall develop a comprehensive program to reduce the
4 incidence of Lyme disease in the state. The program shall include, but
5 not be limited to, maintaining deer populations at manageable levels,
6 increasing public awareness of the causes and prevention of Lyme
7 disease, and assistance to municipalities in high Lyme disease
8 incidence areas.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
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Statement of Purpose:

To reduce the number of Lyme disease cases in the state.