

Lyme Disease Advisory Committee (LDAC) Spring Meeting

April 10, 2025

Minutes

Committee members in attendance (via phone/Microsoft [MS] Teams)

Wendy Adams, Bay Area Lyme Foundation

Barbara Barsocchini, California Lyme Disease Association (LymeDisease.org)

Karen Chew, Lyme Disease Support Network

Vicki Kramer, PhD, California Department of Public Health (CDPH)

Robert Lane, PhD, University of California, Berkeley

Kelly Furey, PhD, Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California (MVCAC)

Raphael Stricker, MD, California Medical Association

Committee members absent

Chris Parlier, Lyme Disease Support Network, Committee Chair

Melanie Thompson, DO, California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO)

Other attendees

CDPH Vector-Borne Disease Section (CDPH-VBDS) staff, including:

Tony Kovach, PhD, Associate Public Health Biologist

Allyx Nicolici, MPH, CHES®, Health Educator

Megan Saunders, PhD, MSPH, Senior Public Health Biologist

Other members of CDPH-VBDS, local vector control agencies, and the public joined the meeting via MS Teams.

I. Roll Call and Opening Comments

Meeting brought to order by Dr. Vicki Kramer (in lieu of LDAC Chair) at 9:32am. Dr. Kramer introduced the newest members of the Committee: Dr. Kelly Furey (replacing Dr. Paula Macedo for MVCAC) and Dr. Melanie Thompson (replacing Dr. Matt Willis for CCLHO).

II. Committee Member Updates

Dr. Kelly Furey provided an update for MVCAC regarding several mosquito and vector control districts who are conducting routine tick surveillance, including in Placer, San Mateo, and Shasta counties. Surveillance projects included inspection for *Ixodes pacificus* on residential properties, surveillance for invasive species (including *Amblyomma americanum*), and assessment of tick abundance following California wildfires.

Dr. Robert Lane shared updates about ongoing studies to identify *Borrelia* in Alameda County; a current study is underway to detect and isolate *Borrelia* species R57 from infected rodents.

Dr. Raphael Stricker shared updates about two journal articles recently published: one regarding the MyLymeData Survey Group and disease case classification, and another regarding *Babesia* studies taking place in Canada.

Ms. Wendy Adams provided a status update on national Lyme disease programs following recent federal funding changes; implications for research committees, projects, and vaccine development were noted.

Ms. Barbara Barsocchini gave a brief update regarding vector control operations in her region following the recent wildfires in Los Angeles County.

III. CDPH Progress Report

A. Surveillance Update (Megan Saunders, PhD, MSPH)

Dr. Saunders summarized reported Lyme disease cases in California from 2015 through 2024, with 107 Lyme disease cases reported in 2024 (provisional data). Dr. Saunders summarized *Ixodes pacificus* surveillance in 2024 and shared maps depicting adult and nymphal tick infection prevalence for *Borrelia burgdorferi* and *B. miyamotoi* by California county. Dr. Saunders also provided an overview of *Borrelia* spp. infection prevalence in ticks collected and tested so far in 2025 (from January 1 to April 4, 2025); ticks are collected and tested via real-time PCR by CDPH-VBDS. Current CDPH-VBDS projects and goals for tick surveillance and testing were also described, including a continued focus on collecting *Ixodes pacificus* immatures and enhancing surveillance and testing of ticks from counties with low sample sizes. As a general update, Dr. Saunders also announced the name change for the causative agent of Pacific Coast tick fever: *Rickettsia rickettsii* subspecies *californica* (formerly *Rickettsia philipii* / 364D).

Following the presentation, Dr. Saunders and other CDPH colleagues answered questions from the Committee about nomenclature for rickettsioses and differences in clinical presentation; it was noted that the name “Pacific Coast tick fever” (PCTF) will not be changing (despite a change in the name of the causative agent), and that PCTF and Rocky Mountain spotted fever are closely related diseases but have different clinical presentations. Dr. Lane summarized the reasoning for the name change from *Rickettsia philipii* to *Rickettsia rickettsii* subsp. *californica*.

The Committee also discussed *Borrelia hermsii* and *B. nientonii* name changes. Dr. Saunders noted that CDPH-VBDS also collects and tests soft ticks as part of surveillance for human case investigation; all soft ticks tested in 2024 were negative for *B. hermsii*.

B. Education Update (Allyx Nicolici, MPH, CHES)

Ms. Nicolici provided an update on CDPH's tick-related outreach and education efforts since November 2024, including distribution of CDPH's printed tick materials, social media messages, and digital resources, highlighting local agency use of CDPH tick materials. Earlier this year, CDPH-VBDS updated its [Lyme disease webpage](#) using suggestions and feedback from previous Committee discussions. The updated webpage provides comprehensive information about Lyme disease, including transmission, signs/symptoms, groups at risk of infection, and key information patients can share with a doctor regarding potential tick exposure. Upcoming projects include outreach for Lyme Disease Awareness Month in May and updating social media collections for Lyme disease awareness and tick-bite prevention.

Following the presentation, members of the Committee discussed Lyme carditis and inquired about *Borrelia miyamotoi* information listed in CDPH resources and messaging.

IV. Presentation: Influence of elevation on *Ixodes pacificus* nymph seasonality, abundance, and *Borrelia* infection prevalence in the Sierra Nevada foothills (Tony Kovach, PhD)

Dr. Kovach presented on [CDPH research](#) that was recently published in the Journal of Medical Entomology discussing the impact of elevation on nymphal *Ixodes pacificus* abundance, presence/absence, and *Borrelia* infection prevalence. Dr. Kovach provided an overview of nymph collection and statistical modeling; research findings indicate nymphal abundance decreases at higher elevations, and a seasonal shift is observed. According to the study, type of substrate did not make a difference in nymphal abundance, presence/absence, and infection rate.

As a follow-up to the published research, Dr. Kovach also summarized a recent pilot study observing nymphal tick movement on and around substrates at a site in Folsom Lake State Recreation area. For a six-week period in 2024, nymphs were collected, marked, and released at different locations on a specific substrate; one week later, the marked nymphs were found and collected to determine movement from the original release location. In this pilot study, it was observed that nymphal ticks more often moved vertically than horizontally on substrates; many ticks were found at the top of the substrate in the study, suggesting that there is a potential increased risk for human exposure to nymphal ticks on top surfaces of substrates.

Following the presentation, members of the Committee discussed tick hosts, including deer and lizards, and their activity in the study area.

V. Discussion: Lyme disease key messages – brochure and beyond (Allyx Nicolici)

Ms. Nicolici provided an overview of CDPH's existing [Lyme disease brochure](#), a comprehensive educational resource that CDPH has updated, printed, and distributed in the past several years. Ms. Nicolici shared ideas for extracting key messages from the brochure for use in other, updated Lyme disease resources, such as flyers and handouts that may be better suited for both digital and print distribution. The Committee discussed the benefits and limitations of the brochure format, and members of the Committee provided suggestions for different resource formats, including those with less text, more images, and more links to additional information. CDPH will consider comments and recommendations from the Committee when determining whether to update the existing Lyme disease brochure or create a new resource.

VI. Public Comment

Dr. Kramer read a public comment that was submitted to the Committee Chair prior to the meeting. The comment was from a member of the public whose son has Lyme disease; the individual expressed concern about the lack of awareness of Lyme disease among the medical community in California.

No other public comments were made during the meeting.

VII. Closing Comments

Members of the Committee expressed thanks to the presenters. The next LDAC meeting will be held in November 2025 – date and time to be announced.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20am.