

Lyme Disease Advisory Committee (LDAC) Spring Meeting

April 15, 2021

Minutes

Committee members in attendance (via phone/WebEx)

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

James Miller, PhD, University of California, Los Angeles

Paula Macedo, DVM, PhD, Mosquito and Vector Control Association of California (MVCAC)

Chris Parlier, Lyme Disease Support Network, Committee Chair

Raphael Stricker, MD, California Medical Association

Committee member absent

Scott Morrow, MD, MPH, San Mateo County Health Department

Other attendees

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

Kerry Padgett, PhD, Supervising Public Health Biologist

Megan Saunders, PhD, MSPH, Senior Public Health Biologist

Allyx Nicolici, MPH, CHES®, Health Educator

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

I. Roll Call and Opening Comments

Meeting brought to order by Chris Parlier, LDAC Chair, at 10:04 a.m. It was announced that Lisa Messner, Lyme Disease Support Network, resigned from the LDAC; the Committee thanked Lisa for her service.

II. Committee Member Updates

Dr. Vicki Kramer provided a brief update on current CDPH-VBDS activities and how the program has been impacted by the COVID-19 response. Despite some staff being redirected, CDPH-VBDS continues to maintain core functions.

Dr. Jim Miller provided a brief update on research laboratories in Montana and Connecticut that are currently looking at the pathogenesis of *Borrelia* at the genetic level.

Dr. Raphael Sticker provided a general update on his patients diagnosed with Lyme disease who received a COVID-19 vaccine.

Barbara Barsocchini shared that the Los Angeles County West Vector Control District has a new director. She serves on the Board of Trustees.

Dr. Robert Lane shared that data collected for the post-fire tick ecology research project at the UC Hopland Research and Extension Center are still being analyzed, and the research team is hoping to publish their findings soon.

III. CDPH Progress Report

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

Dr. Saunders provided an update of reported Lyme disease cases in California, with data from 2011 through 2020. Dr. Saunders also detailed the results of *Ixodes pacificus* ticks tested for *Borrelia* spp. by CDPH-VBDS from October 2020 to April 2021. Over 2,400 adult and 26 nymphal *I. pacificus* ticks were submitted for testing from 17 counties in California. Of the ticks submitted for testing, 60 adult and 2 nymphal ticks tested positive for *Borrelia burgdorferi* sensu lato, and 19 adult ticks tested positive for *B. miyamotoi*. Current CDPH-VBDS projects and goals for tick surveillance and testing were also described.

Following the presentation, the Committee discussed methods of tick testing (including direct fluorescent antibody testing and polymerase chain reaction testing), as well as which pathogens are included for coinfection testing.

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

Ms. Nicolici provided an update on tick-related outreach and education efforts since November 2020. The distribution of CDPH-VBDS's tick-bite prevention printed educational materials (including tick identification wallet cards and brochures) was detailed. Ms. Nicolici also shared that a new residential tick control fact sheet was created using input and comments from the LDAC at the November 2020 meeting. The new fact sheet is available online: [Controlling Ticks Around Your Home \(PDF\)](#). New CDPH-VBDS resource webpages and outreach through email newsletters were also highlighted.

Following the presentation, the Committee discussed the need to increase Lyme disease outreach to the medical community in California, and discussed possible approaches to enhance awareness.

IV. Presentation: *Borrelia* diversity in California *Ixodes pacificus* ticks (Kerry Padgett, PhD; Megan Saunders, PhD, MSPH)

Drs. Padgett and Saunders provided an overview of CDPH-VBDS's tick testing program, with the goal of more accurately determining the prevalence of the Lyme disease spirochete (*B. burgdorferi* sensu stricto) in California ticks. The geographic distribution of *Borrelia* in

California was shared; evidence was presented to indicate that the risk of exposure to the Lyme disease spirochete is almost non-existent in southern California, while risk of exposure to *B. bissettae* in southern California is low. Goals for the CDPH-VBDS laboratory program include completing *B. burgdorferi* sensu lato genetic sequencing for ticks collected in 2020, continuing the sequencing of all *B. burgdorferi* sensu lato positives going forward, and communicating the prevalence of *B. burgdorferi* sensu stricto in California via CDPH-VBDS's interactive Lyme disease map.

Following the presentation, the Committee discussed how this laboratory information is being presented to local public health and vector control agencies. The Committee also discussed different tick testing techniques and Lyme disease prevalence in southern California. Committee members discussed which university laboratories in California are conducting tick-related research. Dr. Vicki Kramer encouraged the Committee to sign up for the [Pacific Southwest Center of Excellence in Vector-Borne Diseases \(PacVec\) newsletter](#) to stay up-to-date on current tick-related research.

V. Discussion: Social media messaging for Lyme Disease Awareness Month and beyond (Allyx Nicolici, MPH, CHES®)

Ms. Nicolici shared ideas for the creation of new social media messaging and complementary designs/graphics to be used by local vector control agencies for Lyme Disease Awareness Month (which is recognized in May of each year). Ms. Nicolici presented sample messages and graphics and asked the Committee for their input regarding language for Lyme diseases awareness and prevention. New messaging ideas for general tick season were also presented, and the Committee made suggestions specific to content and visual representation of important Lyme disease concepts.

Following the collection of feedback and additional ideas, CDPH-VBDS will create and disseminate new social media messages and graphics for Lyme Disease Awareness Month and tick season in California.

VI. Public comment

- A member of the public suggested that including messaging about the use of permethrin on shoes and other clothing items would be beneficial for the Lyme disease prevention social media messages. This individual also provided feedback about elements in social media graphics that would appeal to a wider audience who might have different experiences in nature and who may have experienced different signs of Lyme disease (e.g. not everyone who has Lyme disease experiences a bullseye rash).

- A member of the public shared feedback related to the Lyme Disease Awareness Month social media graphics, especially the importance of including diversity and representation when showing depictions of the Lyme disease erythema migrans (EM) rash.
- A member of the public shared information about the progression of their Lyme disease symptoms and expressed concern around the lack of physician education regarding Lyme disease.
- A member of the public shared information about their daughter's experience with Lyme disease. This individual mentioned that they would like to see more information about tick testing and more aggressive distribution of updated resources.

The Committee thanked the public for their comments, expressing that the LDAC is committed to raising awareness about Lyme disease in California.

The next LDAC meeting will be held in the fall of 2021. Meeting date and time to be determined.

Meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m.