



I-TICK Passive Surveillance and the Tick App

What is I-TICK?

I-TICK, (Illinois Tick Inventory Collaboration network), is a surveillance program to gather information about ticks of public health concern in Illinois. The purpose is to develop a network of volunteers to collect data to help our lab determine the risk of tick-borne disease based on where and when ticks occur.

How can I participate in I-TICK?

There are two ways to take part in I-TICK: freezing a tick in alcohol, recording location and date, and eventually mailing us the data when our campus opens, or collect and submit all data using a smart phone or web app. Participants are free to choose one (or both) methods.

1. To use the Tick App
 - a. Download the free Tick App in GooglePlay or AppStore, more info at www.thetickapp.org
 - b. Read the consent form, create an account and complete the enrollment survey.
 - c. Complete a daily log of outdoor activities, tick protection methods used and tick encounters.
 - d. Found a tick? Take a picture, and submit it in a daily log or tick report. Entomologists will identify the tick (if at all possible) and return that information to you.
2. Collect a tick and store in your freezer *until we are able to accept ticks* through the mail
 - a. Place tick on a paper towel wet, but not 'dripping', with rubbing alcohol into a ziploc plastic bag.
 - b. On a piece of paper, record the **date** you found the tick, the **location** (at least the county) where you believe the tick came from, and if you traveled outside your *county* within the last 10 days
 - c. Please consider including your name and email on the paper. Your information is completely protected – we will only email you if we have a question.
 - d. Place the bag with the tick and the paper with data you recorded into a *second* ziploc and place in the freezer. Alcohol and freezing will kill the tick and the alcohol will eventually evaporate.
 - e. **Be sure both ziploc bags are completely sealed.**
 - f. As soon as we are able we will contact you with instructions on sending us those ticks.
 - g. Please note: This method does NOT provide tick species identification –(the Tick App does)

What is the Tick App?

In 2020 we are adding “the Tick App” (www.thetickapp.org) to our program to provide an easy way for participants to collect data while following social distancing guidelines. The Tick App was developed to better understand exposure to ticks, because our behavior can influence the chances of being bitten by a tick. Information from the Tick App helps us understand where ticks are and what people were doing when they got a tick. This information helps design better strategies to prevent diseases transmitted by ticks.

Why would I want to participate in I-TICK? Ticks can carry a number of diseases that affect people and other animals. The data collected help identify where and when a tick comes in contact with people, pets, and livestock. These data then allow us to focus surveillance methods to determine the risk of disease. Additionally, the Tick App will provide information on what human activities affect the risk of finding a tick.

Who can participate? Anyone in Illinois is welcome, but participants must be 18 years or older to use the Tick App.

When does it occur? The I-TICK program collects data any time, regardless of season or time of year.

Where does it occur? Anywhere in Illinois, where a person works or relaxes, including your yard or property.

The location where the tick was found is important to I-TICK! We require at least the county of collection to include the data in our research. Please submit location and date with any frozen tick. If you use the Tick App, you can enable the location function on your smart phone if you are comfortable doing so. If not, there is a place in the Tick App to manually record location. Please provide at least the county, but even better, a more exact location such as the city or state park. All data are always kept confidential.

What will it cost me to participate? The Tick App is free for anyone to use, but you will have to pay for your *cell phone data*. There is also a desktop version if you prefer or do not have a smart phone. If you collect and freeze a tick to (eventually) mail to us, your cost would be a first class stamp.

Please note:

While the Tick App is for anyone to use regardless of their location in the U.S., our I-TICK program will only analyze data from Illinois. If you are traveling and find a tick anywhere in the U.S., you may still submit the information using the Tick App – the data are useful to other research programs studying tick-borne diseases.

In previous years, participants collected ticks and mailed them to us using “tick kits” distributed through “hubs” throughout Illinois. In 2020, because of restrictions due to COVID-19, we are unable to use tick kits and ask participants to choose one or both of the other collection methods.

Program information:

The I-TICK program is funded through the [Upper Midwest Center of Excellence in Vector-Borne Disease](#), a consortium of Midwestern universities established in 2017 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and headquartered at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Program leaders at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign are Dr. Rebecca L. Smith, at the College of Veterinary Medicine, and Dr. Nohra Mateus-Pinilla Director of the Wildlife Veterinary Epidemiology Laboratory at the Illinois Natural History Survey. The tick surveillance program and the Tick App examples of the center’s efforts to improve predictions of disease emergence and outbreaks and to optimize surveillance networks and pathogen detection.

The I-TICK program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is partnering with researchers at Columbia University, Michigan State University and the University of Wisconsin – Madison, members of the CDC Regional Centers for Excellence in Vector-Borne diseases, who developed the Tick App. Funding is provided by the Centers for Disease Control.



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