

# Strategies for Tick Control

Concern about ticks and the various diseases they can spread is a **very real issue** for residents of this part of the country. Often the first response may be, “What can I spray to keep my family safe?” Before making any choices, it would be wise to consider various strategies.

## PERSONAL PROTECTION

First and foremost are taking **personal protective** measures which are inexpensive and have been proven to be the **most effective strategy**. These include careful and regular body checks of all family members (including pets), wearing light colored clothing with long sleeves and long pants when working outside, showering immediately after working outdoors, and washing and drying clothes at high temperatures to kill any remaining ticks on clothing. Keep pets out of areas that may have ticks.

## YARD MODIFICATIONS

**Modifications to your yard** include **the removal of barberry** (*Berberis thunbergii*) which has been proven to be an attractive place for ticks to reside, eliminate or discourage places that may be moist (under groundcovers, etc.), develop a border of wood chips or gravel between lawn and woods, move children’s play areas away from wooded areas, etc.

## BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS

A naturally occurring fungus, *Metarhizium anisopliae*, has recently become available under the name **Met-52**. Residential trials in Connecticut and New Jersey showed good control of nymphal ticks. This fungus poses minimal risk to non-target species and does not harm many beneficial insects such as bees, green lacewings, lady beetles, or earthworms. It is offered by a number of different companies available on the internet.

## TICK BOXES VS. TICK TUBES

**Recommended: Tick Boxes marketed by Tick Control System** – These are boxes which attract mice where a dose of insecticide (fipronil) is applied which kills ticks. In field trials this system reduced the tick population by as much as 88% in one year. Boxes are placed by professionals around the perimeter of a property and must be replaced once a year. For information go to [www.tickboxtcs.com](http://www.tickboxtcs.com).

**NOT recommended: Tick tubes** filled with permethrin treated cotton balls have been on the market since the late 1980s. However, studies have shown them to be ineffective in reducing numbers of infected ticks. (Communication from Kirby Stafford, CAES). Also, the permethrin treated cotton can become separated from the tubes and pose risks to pollinators.