

Wilton supports move to have state reduce deer numbers

By FRANK MacEACHERN
 fmaceachern@wiltonvillager.com

WILTON — Wilton is adding its voice asking the state government to step in and reduce the number of deer which is believed to be contributing to the spread of Lyme Disease.

The town is supporting the efforts of the Connecticut Coalition to Eradicate Lyme Disease to press the state to take action. Brennan wrote to Gov. M. Jodi Rell on Nov. 13 asking the state to act in reducing the number of deer.

"We believe the deer count in the town and the area is too high," said Brennan.

Advocates of reducing the deer population say it will help prevent the spread of Lyme Disease. The ticks, which implant the disease into humans, are carried by the deer. Reducing the amount of deer will help cut back on the spread of the disease, argue those proponents.

Brennan said he's among many in the area who

have been bitten by the ticks. He said he was lucky in catching it early and having it treated by antibiotics.

"It's a tricky disease," said Brennan. "Sometimes it's hard to know you've been bit."

The disease can cause a bulls-eye rash and flu-like symptoms, leaving victims feeling exhausted. If left untreated it can cause serious health issues such as arthritis and heart conditions.

One of the advocates in reducing the deer number is Georgina Scholl, MD. A Redding resident she is vice-chairwoman of the Connecticut Coalition to Eradicate Lyme Disease [CCELD].

She argued the state has to take a greater role in educating residents about the disease and also working to reduce deer.

"I'm not advocating hunting, I'm just recommending awareness," she said.

She's also a member of the Fairfield County Municipal Deer Management Alliance which is backing a tick study with the University of New Haven which is currently underway.

Eva Sapia, assistant professor of biology and environmental science at the University of New Haven, is conducting the study. The study is funded by the towns in the alliance.

She is analyzing both the number of ticks and those which carry the bacteria which causes Lyme Disease.

Scholl said this will be the first time there has been a systematic study of ticks across Fairfield County.

Deer are a symbol of nature and create an emotional response among animal lovers, said Scholl. But she and Brennan argue they also harm humans by helping to spread Lyme Disease. Deer have also harmed birds, for instance, said Scholl by disrupting the areas they rely on.

"We are losing bird species because of the excess number of deer," she said.

The CCELD will be meeting senior government officials in January to discuss its concerns, said Scholl.