throughout the city, although many patients came from the same area.

A seroepidemiologic study to determine possible new sources of infection (e.g., dogs, cats) and estimate rates of seropositivity in cattle and sheep and a case-control study on new cases are being conducted.

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Reference

Ixodes dammini: A Junior Synonym for Ixodes scapularis

To the Editor: The authors of “A new tick-borne encephalitis-like virus infecting New England deer ticks, Ixodes dammini” (1) provide useful information regarding a possibly new tick-borne encephalitis-like virus. However, the use of the name Ixodes dammini is not accurate for describing this species. I. dammini (Spielman, Clifford, Piesman, and Corwin) was synonymized with Ixodes scapularis (Say) in 1993 by Oliver et al. (2) and was redescribed in 1996 (3) to reduce confusion regarding identification. Keirans and colleagues summarize a wide array of rigorous studies involving hybridization, assortative mating, isozymes, and morphometrics, all of which provide evidence supporting the synonymization of the two tick species (3).

The synonymization of I. dammini with I. scapularis has been widely accepted. "I. scapularis (=I. dammini)" is still often used, but the use of I. scapularis as the sole nomen for this species is becoming more common (4). Oliver et al. (2) have established I. dammini as a junior subjective synonym of I. scapularis. If scientifically rigorous evidence exists justifying the reestablishment of the species name I. dammini, it must be published according to proper procedure. The proper nomenclature of any species, let alone one of such widespread notoriety and public health importance, is too important to be relegated to a footnote. Until such evidence is presented, the continued misuse of I. dammini serves only to confuse health-care providers, public health professionals, and lay persons.

On a secondary matter, on page 167 of the dispatch, the authors state that “I. (Pholeoixodes) cookei is a one-host tick that is only distantly related to I. dammini and only rarely feeds on humans or mice” (1). I. cookei is a three-host tick (D.E. Sonenshine, pers. comm.), as are all the members of the genus Ixodes.

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References

The Name Ixodes dammini Epidemiologically Justified

To the Editor: Although a large body of evidence has been interpreted as supporting conspecificity of the deer tick (Ixodes dammini) and the blacklegged tick (Ixodes scapularis), according to Chapter VI, Article 23 L of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1), “A name that has been treated as a junior synonym may be used as the valid name of a taxon by an author who considers the synonymy to be erroneous....” Current use of I. scapularis to refer to the vector of Lyme disease obscures important epidemiologic issues. One of the reasons for “sinking” I. dammini was to make it easier to diagnose Lyme disease in areas where the disease was thought to be nonendemic: “The belief that I. dammini does not occur south of Maryland and that I. scapularis is a separate and