Tick Talk: Ticks, Microbes, and the Ecology of Disease

Dr. Michael Allen
Department of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics
University of North Texas Health Science Center

Ticks are obligate hematophagous parasites second only to mosquitoes as vectors of disease. A number of tick-borne diseases have been identified in the United States. The most prevalent among these, Lyme disease, has a CDC estimated incidence of approximately 300,000 cases annually in the United States, making it the most common vector-borne disease in the nation. Other diseases, including Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Powassan, are lower in incidence but potentially lethal, and a number of new viruses have recently been discovered. In this seminar I will discuss our efforts in the Tick-Borne Disease Research Laboratory to determine pathogen incidence and risk in Texas and surrounding states using PCR-based molecular diagnostics. I will discuss the advantages and pitfalls of next generation sequencing and 16S-based metagenomics to survey microbial populations in ticks, and more recent advances using droplet digital PCR. Finally, I will describe our efforts to define the effects of temperature on tick microbiomes in the laboratory using next generation DNA sequencing.

Host: Dr. Michael LaMontagne
Refreshments will be served in the hallway of Bayou 2106 from 11:30AM – 12:00 Noon!

Any person needing an accommodation for a disability to participate in this program should contact the sponsoring organization at (281) 283-3770 to make the necessary arrangements.