Vector Waste Fatality File

Case 1:

Farmer with Lyme disease: ‘My workload had to halve’

A farmer whose whole life changed forever when he was bitten by a tick that caused him to catch Lyme disease has warned the farming community that they are the most vulnerable to suffer from the dangerous infection.

Edwin Symes, who rears 120 cattle and 400 sheep outside Wicklow town, says that he was bitten by a tick on a forestry plantation he owns in Scartaglen, Co Kerry in 2014 and that the side-effects of the disease impacted his body immediately.

Case 2:

Man turns to farming after Lyme disease diagnosis.

As cases of Lyme disease continue to rise in Ontario, one man is living proof that a diagnosis doesn’t mean one still can’t live a full life.

Steve Lawrence tackled the disease by drastically changing his lifestyle and leaving his old construction job behind – then he decided to buy a farm.

Lawrence became sick in 2010 and struggled with different health issues that ranged from poor and blurred vision to memory loss and shortness of breath and exhaustion.

“You are constantly complaining about being sick,” said Lawrence. “While people are looking at you like it’s all in your head.”

A lifetime hunter, Lawrence believes he contracted Lyme disease after being bitten by a tick in the woods, as he remembers he was bitten on his back shoulder which left a bull’s-eye rash.

Still, he didn’t get a diagnosis for Lyme disease, and instead, his symptoms were being treated separately.

“Nobody looked at what caused my vision to go, or what had caused my exhaustion to happen,” he said. “They had just blamed it on my lifestyle and said that I had worked too hard and that’s what caused it.”

By chance, Lawrence went to the Oshawa Gun Club to shoot one evening. In fact, the club was closed for a fundraiser for Lyme disease which proved to be a turning point in his recovery.

“I said I don’t have a clue what Lyme disease is, and they gave me the pamphlet and I looked at it and looked at the symptoms and basically, I went down the list and checked all the boxes and said, ‘This is me.’”

A diagnosis soon followed. Lawrence, who needed to focus on his diet, decided to cut out the grocery store and bought a farm near Clarington, Ont., instead, and started raising his own livestock and growing his own food.

“To recover from Lyme, you really got to eat clean with no pesticides, and you really got to know where your food comes from,” he said.

Now a master beekeeper, his honey products are winning awards, and his wife Patricia is glad to see her husband, happy and healthy again.