

Breakthrough could help us understand why some tick bites cause bizarre red meat allergies

Scientists at the University of Virginia have seemingly come closer to unraveling the mystery behind a strange red meat allergy caused by certain tick bites. They report finding a way to trigger the allergy in lab mice—an important step for studying the condition. And with the help of animal experiments, they also claim to have identified important changes to the immune system that might be caused by these bites.

Red meat allergy is what happens when people become hypersensitized to the sugar alpha-gal, which is abundantly produced by most mammals but not primates (like us). Its symptoms are much like the typical food allergy, with hives and swelling being common. Like other food allergies, these reactions can also be life-threatening.

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At this point, there are still more questions than answers about red meat allergy.

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“One of the outstanding questions in the field is what is it about the tick bite, or the tick itself, that induces an immune response to alpha-gal,” [researcher Loren] Erickson said. “This model could be used to figure out what chemicals/compounds in the tick trigger an immune response.”

Read full, original post: [Researchers Are Closer to Understanding the Strange Meat Allergy Caused by Ticks](#)