



EPIDEMIOLOGY

# WHAT DO GERMANS WANT TO KNOW ABOUT MEAT ALLERGY AND TICK BITES? A NATIONWIDE GOOGLE SEARCH ANALYSIS FROM 2015 TO 2018

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**Background:** It is difficult to estimate the awareness of meat allergy as lay term for alpha-galactose syndrome associated with tick bites in the population at large due to a lack of affected persons seeking medical assistance.

Internet search data can reflect the interest of a population in different topics and thereby identify what the population wants to know.

**Objective:** Our aim was to assess the interest of the German population in ticks and meat allergy.

**Materials and methods:** Google AdWords Keyword Planner was used to identify search terms related to ticks and meat allergy in Germany from January 2015 to December 2018.

**Results:** A total of 372 meat allergy-related search terms and 1999 tick-related search terms were identified with 26,981,060 Google searches in the period under review.

In contrast, meat allergy was searched for much less, representing the rarity of the disease. Overall, two peaks of the respective search engine volume were seen in July 2017 and June 2018. Analysis of the temporal course showed a higher monthly search volume for tick-associated keywords during the European summer months (April-September) compared to the winter months (October-March)

**Conclusion:** Our study provides insight into terms and fields of interest related to ticks and meat allergy relevant to the German population. Furthermore, temporal trends and courses are shown. This information could aid in the development and implementation of effective and sustainable awareness campaigns by developing information sources targeted to the population's broad interest or by implementing new Internet campaigns.

