

Group: Anti-Trump video is 'homophobic'

By JILL COLVIN
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A prominent group that represents LGBT conservatives says a video shared by Ron DeSantis' presidential campaign that slams rival Donald Trump for his past support of gay and transgender people "ventured into homophobic territory."

The "DeSantis War Room" Twitter account shared the video on Friday — the last day of June's LGBTQ+ Pride Month — that features footage of Trump at the Republican National Convention in 2016 saying he would "do everything in my power to protect

our LGBTQ citizens." Trump had been pledging protection from terrorist attacks weeks after the shootings at the Pulse Nightclub, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, that was the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history at that time.

The video also highlights "LGBTQ for Trump" T-shirts sold by the former president's campaign and his past comments saying he would be comfortable with Caitlyn Jenner, the former Olympic decathlete who came out as a transgender woman in 2015,



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using any bathroom at Trump Tower and OK with transgender women competing one day in the Miss Universe pageant, which Trump owned at the time of those remarks.

The video then suddenly veers in a different direction, accompanied by dark, thumping music and images of DeSantis, the Florida governor who is trailing Trump by wide margins in the polls for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

It promotes headlines that DeSantis signed "the most extreme slate of anti-trans laws in modern history" and a "draconian anti-trans bathroom bill." The images

are spliced together with footage of muscular, shirtless men and several Hollywood actors, including Brad Pitt, seen wearing a leather mask from the movie "Troy."

"To wrap up 'Pride Month,' let's hear from the politician who did more than any other Republican to celebrate it," the DeSantis campaign tweeted.

The video drew immediate criticism from prominent LGBTQ+ Republicans, including the Log Cabin Republicans, which bills itself as the nation's "largest Republican organization dedicated to representing LGBT conservatives."

"Today's message from the

DeSantis campaign War Room is divisive and desperate.

Republicans and other commonsense conservatives know Ron DeSantis has alienated swing-state and younger voters," the group said in a tweet, adding that DeSantis' "extreme rhetoric goes has just ventured into homophobic territory."

The group said his "rhetoric will lose hard-fought gains in critical races across the nation.

This old playbook has been tried in the past and has failed — repeatedly." The post said DeSantis' "naive policy positions are dangerous and politically stupid."

Ticks can use static trick to land on you, your pets

By MADDIE BURAKOFF
AP Science Writer

NEW YORK — Hungry ticks have some slick tricks. They can zoom through the air using static electricity to latch onto people, pets and other animals, new research shows.

Humans and animals naturally pick up static charges as they go about their days. And those charges are enough to give ticks a boost to their next blood meal, according to a study published Friday in the journal Current Biology.

While the distance is tiny, "it's the equivalent of us jumping three or four flights of stairs in one go," said study author Sam England, an ecologist now at Berlin's Natural History Museum.

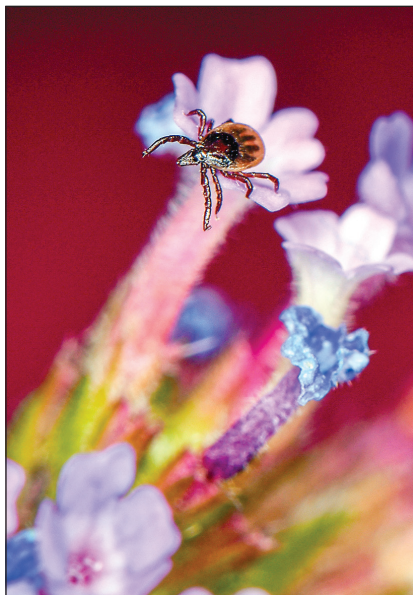
Ticks are "ambush predators," explained Stephen Rich, a public health entomologist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

They can't jump or fly onto their hosts, he said. Instead, they hang out on a branch or a blade of grass with their legs outstretched — a behavior known as "questing" — and wait for people or animals to pass by so they can grab on and bite.

It seemed that ticks were limited to how far they could stretch on their "tippy toes," England said. But now, scientists are learning that static charges may help expand their reach.

"They can now actually end up latching onto hosts that don't make direct contact with them," he said.

The researchers looked at a species of tick called the castor bean tick, which is common across



Associated Press

This photo provided by researcher Sam England in June 2023 shows a tick sitting on a flower.

Europe. This bloodsucker and its cousins are major culprits in spreading diseases to animals and humans, including Lyme disease, and are most active in warm months.

Researchers found that when they charged up electrodes and placed them near young ticks, the creatures would whiz through the air to land on those electrodes.

A normal level of static — the charge that fur, feathers, scales or clothes pick up with movement — could pull the critters across gaps of a fraction of an inch (a few millimeters or centimeters), according to the study. While those distances may seem small to us, for a tiny tick, they represent a big leap, England said.



Associated Press

This June 30 image shows a sign prohibiting fireworks in the Sandia Mountains that border Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Swapping fireworks for Silly String?

By SUSAN MONTOYA
BRYAN
Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Smokey Bear said it best: "Only you can prevent wildfires."

Following in the footsteps of their famous mascot, U.S. Forest Service managers in the drought-stricken Southwest are urging

people to swap their fireworks this Fourth of July for glow sticks, noisemakers and cans of red, white and blue Silly String.

Not so fast, say some environmentalists. While it's worth encouraging folks not to use fireworks amid escalating wildfire danger, they say it's kind of silly that federal land managers would suggest using aerosol cans of sticky party string out in nature.

The advice began to pop up in recent weeks, with regional forest officials and the New Mexico State Forestry Division pumping out public service announcements offering alternatives aimed at curbing human-sparked blazes.

They used a template that echoed similar advice from the National Fire Protection Association and even American Red Cross chapters in other states.

"These are alternatives for children and young people to do in lieu of fireworks in their neighborhood or on their property. That way we'd like to keep things contained to your property and your neighborhood," said George Ducker, a spokesman for the State Forestry Division. "We're certainly not advocating folks go out into the forest and, you know, shoot off Silly String."

But if they do, the Forest Service has one request: Leave no trace.

However people choose to celebrate, the rules and regulations need to be followed if they are on national forest land no matter if

it's July Fourth or any other day, said John Winn, a spokesman for the federal agency.

"That includes but is not limited to the restricted use of fireworks, properly disposing of garbage in garbage bins, maintaining quiet hours and cleaning up after camping or day-use activities," he said.

Cleaning up spray streamers fits in that category, he added.

While the spray can party favors have been around since the 1970s, manufacturers keep their recipes under wraps. In general, the string is made of a polymer resin, a substance that makes the resin foam up, a solvent, some coloring and the propellant that forces the chemicals out of the can.

Authorities in Los Angeles decided to ban aerosol party streamers in 2004 on Hollywood Boulevard every Halloween because partygoers were using the empty cans as projectiles and many were left littering the streets and clogging gutters.

Towns in Massachusetts and Alabama also have adopted ordinances restricting the use of the string, pointing to problems during special events. In one New York town, firefighters who participated in a parade complained that the string was damaging the paint on their trucks.

Rebecca Sobel with the group WildEarth Guardians said party string is just one of the hundreds of seemingly benign products that pervade daily life.

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