

## **WARM WEATHER BRINGS OUT PEOPLE...AND TICKS (Lake County Health Department April 2009)**

Warm temperatures in spring bring people outside just in time for the annual tick season in Lake County. Often during outdoor activities like hiking and picnicking, ticks can attach themselves to clothing or skin and ride home with people or pets. By following a few simple guidelines, you can avoid unwelcome hitchhikers and still enjoy the beautiful outdoors.

There are two species of ticks in Lake County, the **American dog tick** and the **deer tick**. Dog ticks are one quarter-inch long as adults, much smaller as juveniles, and are dark reddish-brown with irregular silvery patterns on their back. Dog ticks do not carry Lyme disease. This species is the most common tick found throughout Illinois. Deer ticks are much smaller, about one-eighth-inch as adults, they are dark brown to bright red and have black legs and are rare in Lake County. Deer ticks can carry Lyme disease.

For identification photos see:

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/ld\\_transmission.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/ld_transmission.htm)

<http://www.lymenet.org/pictures.shtml>

<http://www.ent.iastate.edu/imagegal/ticks/>

### **Tips for reducing tick habitat include:**

- Clear leaf litter under trees, and keep the ground clean under bird feeders.
- Keep grass near playground equipment short.
- Install a wood chip or gravel barrier between lawns and wooded and tall grass areas.
- Minimize wood piles as these are attractive to small mammals such as mice which also carry ticks.
- For images and other tips see: [http://www.wwhd.org/TLD\\_CD/anaprop2.htm](http://www.wwhd.org/TLD_CD/anaprop2.htm)

### **Tips for reducing exposure to ticks:**

- Stay on trails when in Forest Preserves and parks.
- Wear light-colored, protective clothing—long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, boots or sturdy shoes, and a head covering. Tuck trouser cuffs in socks, tuck in shirt tails.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET primarily to clothes. Apply sparingly to exposed skin(except the face). Be sure to wash treated skin after coming indoors. Use repellents containing permethrin to treat clothes (especially pants, socks and shoes), but not skin. Always follow label directions and supervise children in the use of repellents.
- Walk in the center of trails so plants do not brush against you.
- Check yourself, children and other family members every two to three hours for ticks. Most ticks seldom attach quickly and rarely transmit a tick-borne disease until they have been attached for 72 hours. Transmission of the bacterium is extremely low if the tick is not engorged. If your pets spend time outdoors, regularly check them for ticks, too.

### **Prompt removal of ticks helps to prevent infection. To find and remove ticks:**

- Check the skin and clothing of anyone that has been in grassy areas for an extended period. Pay extra attention to the neck, behind the ears and the groin.
- Use fine-tipped tweezers or shield your fingers with a tissue when removing a tick. Do not burn the tick with a match or cover it with petroleum jelly.

- Grasp the tick close to the skin surface and pull upward with slow, even pressure. Do not twist or pull the tick quickly; this causes the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin. Do not squeeze the tick's body.
- Once the tick is removed, disinfect the bite site and wash your hands with soap and water.
- Make a note of the date you removed the tick and save it for identification in case you become ill. Place the tick in a plastic bag and put it in your freezer.

If you have any signs or symptoms of tick-borne disease 10 to 55 days following a tick bite, seek medical help. Symptoms of Lyme disease include "bull's-eye" rash or lesion (generally seven to 14 days after the tick has consumed a blood meal) accompanied by fever, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, and/or joint aches. Red itchy skin around the tick bite lasting one to three days immediately after the bite is not a "bull's-eye" rash and is an allergic reaction to the tick bite. If you experience any of the signs or symptoms following a tick bite, you should consult your physician and explain that you were bitten by a tick.

For questions, call the Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center at (847) 377-8030.

For more information about ticks see the following websites:

Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) tick fact sheets:

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/pccommonticks.htm>

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/tickkey.htm>

[http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/tick\\_dist.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/tick_dist.htm)

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/forms/ohp/ArthropodSpecimenForm.pdf>