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Early Signs Indicate It Could Be A Bad Year For Ticks



Zak Failla 06/16/2019 12:00 p.m.



Be on the lookout for ticks, which may carry Lyme disease, according to local and federal health officials. Photo Credit: *USDAgov*

With Memorial Day in the rearview mirror and the weather warming up, health officials are warning that it might be time to prepare for an influx of ticks in the area.

According to reports, the lack of late-season snow, and climate change led to more adult ticks surviving the winter, which led to more nymphal ticks and overcrowding earlier than normal. The overcrowding led to an uptick in the number of ticks spreading nationwide.

With a rise in the tick population, which continues expanding, there is expected to be an increased number of Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases spreading.

According to the Department of Health, "Lyme disease is an infection caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is spread to humans through the bite of infected black-legged ticks (or deer ticks). Not all deer ticks are infected with the bacteria.

Lyme disease can affect people of any age and there is no vaccine for Lyme disease currently available. Lyme disease is the most prevalent tick-borne disease in the area and has been reportable since 1986.

Ticks can be active any time the temperature is above 45 degrees. Young deer ticks - called nymphs - are active from mid-May to mid-

August and are approximately the size of poppy seeds. Adult ticks are most active from March to mid-May and from mid-August to November and are near the size of sesame seeds. Both nymphs and adults can spread Lyme disease.

Early symptoms of Lyme disease include flu-like symptoms such as headaches, body aches, fevers, chills, and joint pain. About half of those infected with the Lyme bacteria will also get a circular rash that grows outward from the center. The disease can be treated with antibiotics if caught early, but can cause serious health problems if it is untreated.

According to the Department of Health, "in tick-infested areas, your best protection is to avoid contact with soil, leaf litter and vegetation. However, if you garden, hike, camp, hunt, work or otherwise spend time in the outdoors, you can still protect yourself:"

- Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks easily;
- Wear enclosed shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants;

- Check clothes and any exposed skin frequently for ticks while outdoors;
- Consider using insect repellent;
- Stay on cleared, well-traveled trails. Walk in the center of trails. Avoid dense woods and bushy areas;
- Avoid sitting directly on the ground or on stone walls;
- Keep long hair tied back, especially when gardening;
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after going indoors (preferably within two hours) to wash off and more easily find ticks that may be on you;
- Do a final, full-body tick check at the end of the day (also check children and pets), and remove ticks promptly.

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