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Social Services | Public Health | Behavioral Health

news release

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Take precautions against ticks this season

Tick season is here, and the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) is reminding people to protect themselves and their animals.

The tiny, spider-like bugs attach themselves onto the skin of people and animals and feed on their blood. While many ticks are not harmful, there are some that can transmit disease.

Only one tick found locally can transmit the bacterium that causes Lyme disease—the Western blacklegged tick.



Western blacklegged tick *Ixodes pacificus*

DHHS Supervising Environmental Health Specialist Ben Dolf said, "The most important way to avoid tick-borne diseases is to avoid being bitten by ticks. Wearing long sleeves and pants alongside appropriate use of EPA registered insect repellents such as DEET and oil of lemon eucalyptus, can act as a barrier against ticks, while light colored clothing allows for easier spotting of

ticks that may be crawling on you. Pets are also susceptible to Lyme disease and can carry ticks into the home. Pet owners should talk to their veterinarians about available tick preventatives and check their pets for ticks after outdoor activities.”

If you find a tick attached to you or your pet, use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the surface of the skin as possible. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Do not jerk or twist it. Make sure the entire tick has been removed, including the head. Once the tick has been removed, clean the area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub or soap and water.

According to California Department of Public Health (CDPH), an infected Western blacklegged tick must be attached to a person and feed for at least 24 hours before it can transmit the bacteria that cause Lyme disease.

The Public Health Laboratory offers free tick identification. After removing a tick, if you want to know what type it is, place it in a sealed container or zip-close bag with a paper towel moistened with water.

If the tick is identified by lab staff as a Western blacklegged tick, they can test it for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, for a \$45 fee.

The Public Health Lab is located at 529 I St. in Eureka. For more information about tick testing, call 707-268-2179.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers the following tips to stay tick-free this season:

- Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter. Ticks are also common locally in our grassy beach dunes.
- When out on the trails, stick to the center of trails.
- Use repellents that contains 20% or greater DEET, picaridin or IR3535 directly on to exposed skin. Children may have increased sensitivity or elevated risks with some types of repellants. Always follow product label instructions. When appropriate, parents should apply products to their children, avoiding hands, eyes and mouth. Do not use repellents on babies younger than 2 months old.
- Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and tents with products containing 0.5 percent permethrin. It remains protective through several washings. Pre-treated clothing is available and may be protective longer.
- Remove ticks found on your body immediately.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors (preferably within two hours) to wash off and more easily find ticks that are crawling on you.
- Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body upon return from tick-infested areas.

- Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist and especially in their hair.
- Examine gear and pets. Ticks can ride into the home on clothing and pets, then attach to a person later, so carefully examine pets, coats and day packs.
 - For more information on ticks and Lyme disease please visit the CDPH website:
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/TickBorneDiseasePrevention.aspx>.

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