

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Department of Health Urges Caution During Tick Season

BISMARCK, N.D. – As the weather gets warmer, ticks and the diseases they carry become a concern for North Dakota residents. The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) encourages people to take precautions against tick bites when outdoors.

“The key to preventing tickborne diseases, such as Lyme disease, anaplasmosis and Rocky Mountain spotted fever, is to avoid tick bites and find and remove ticks promptly,” said Laura Cronquist, an epidemiologist with the NDDoH. “Areas that are heavily wooded or have tall grass or brush are more likely to be infested with ticks, especially between April and September, with the highest risk of disease transmission occurring during the warmer months.”

The NDDoH offers the following tips to help reduce the chance of ticks making contact with your skin:

- Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellent. To find EPA registered products, go to www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you. Always follow label directions.
- Use products that contain permethrin to treat clothing and gear such as boots, backpacks, and tents.
- Talk with your veterinarian about using tick preventives on your pet.
- Avoid wooded and brushy areas with tall grass and leaf litter.
- Walk in the center of trails.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors (preferably within two hours) to wash off and more easily find ticks.
- Carefully examine gear and pets for ticks.
- Place clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors.

The most common symptoms of tickborne diseases include fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle aches and joint pain. Early detection of tickborne diseases is important to prevent potentially severe complications. Individuals should seek medical care if they develop symptoms suggestive of a tickborne disease after spending time outdoors.

The NDDoH is conducting tick surveillance again this year with the help of veterinary clinics and zoos across the state. The voluntary participants will be submitting ticks for identification

and testing from April until November. This surveillance is important to help the NDDoH understand the types of ticks and tickborne diseases that are present in North Dakota.

During the 2017 tick surveillance season, the majority of ticks collected were identified as American dog ticks, which can transmit tularemia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Several veterinary clinics throughout the state also collected ticks that were identified as deer ticks, which can spread Lyme disease, babesiosis, Powassan virus, and other diseases. Deer ticks were submitted from Cass, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Pierce, Rolette, and Walsh counties. Two ticks identified as lone star ticks were submitted from Dunn and Dickey counties. Lone star ticks can transmit ehrlichiosis and tularemia. Additional information about the 2017 tick surveillance project can be found at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/Tickborne/.

For more information on tickborne diseases and tick bite prevention, contact Laura Cronquist at lcronquist@nd.gov, 701.328.2378 or 800.472.2180.

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