

NEWS RELEASE | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | June 6, 2019

Help the North Dakota Department of Health identify lone star ticks

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is asking people to watch for lone star ticks and submit pictures and information by email at ndticks@nd.gov.

During routine tick surveillance this spring, the NDDoH identified a lone star tick from the Stutsman County area. This tick can transmit several different diseases to people. It is an aggressive biter and prefers human hosts as opposed to feeding on animals. The bite from a lone star tick is thought to be associated with the red meat allergy commonly known as alpha-gal; however, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that further research is needed to confirm this link.

“Finding this tick in North Dakota is rare, but we have found this species of tick three years in a row in different areas of the state,” said Kristi Bullinger, tick surveillance coordinator with the NDDoH Division of Microbiology. “Teaming up with the public to identify the lone star tick helps us identify where this tick can be found in the state and determine if there are established populations.”

Helpful hints when submitting pictures:

- Submit photos of ticks that appear to be lone star ticks. Female lone star ticks have a white dot on their back.
- If possible, include a dime or penny in the picture for scale.
- Do not submit pictures of ticks that are fully engorged (full of blood)
- Make sure pictures are clear.
- Make sure you indicate some information about the tick - the date it was found, the county it was found in, and if the person or animal it was removed from had any recent travel out of the area.
- The department will return information about the tick via email, but this may take several weeks.

People who experience tick bites and develop an illness afterwards should call their health care provider. Early diagnosis and treatment are important to reduce the risk of serious infections. The NDDoH does not offer tick testing for evidence of infection. Results from testing a tick should never be used for diagnosis or treatment decisions.

During the 2018 tick surveillance season, most ticks collected were identified as American dog ticks, which can transmit tularemia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Deer ticks, which can spread Lyme disease, babesiosis, Powassan virus, and other diseases, were submitted from twenty-five counties.

One tick identified as a lone star tick was submitted from Cass County. Lone star ticks can transmit ehrlichiosis and tularemia. Additional information about the 2018 tick surveillance project and tickborne diseases in North Dakota can be found at www.ndhealth.gov/disease/tickborne/.



Female Lone Star Tick (CDC Photo)

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