

Lyme Disease: What Scouts Should Know

Update from the Leader files

Lyme Disease (LD), one of the most prevalent infectious diseases to affect North America, is spreading rapidly. Although it is less common in Canada than the United States, reported cases have doubled since 1990. This article is intended to provide Scouters an overview of the disease, (the disease can be successfully treated if caught early) and more importantly, preventive measures active outdoor Scouting members can take.

The Tick, *Ixodes scapularis*, *Ixodes pacificus* (BC)

The carrier's common name, deer tick, is somewhat misleading. Although most host/parasite relations are very specific, the deer tick seems to have very liberal tastes when it comes to warm-blooded hosts, and may latch onto deer, mice, dogs, birds, or you.

Deer ticks go through three life stages, each stage feeding on different hosts, and it takes two years for a tick to mature. In late fall, blood-engorged mature female ticks lay about 2,500 eggs. The eggs hatch and by late summer, tick larvae the size of a pin head move into low-lying grass or shrubs waiting for a host to brush up against them. Once they've fed, they drop off their hosts and reappear the following spring as nymphs. The nymphs are also incredibly small, about the size of the period at the end of this sentence.

Researchers have found that white footed mice, along with skunks and raccoons act as reservoirs for LD bacteria. Larvae and nymphs pick up the disease from feeding on infected mice. The ticks then spread the infection to uninfected hosts, such as newborn mice, who expand the disease reservoir.

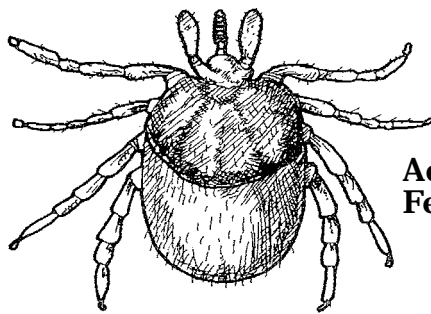
Tick season begins in May when overwintering adults make one last effort to find a host. Most tick bites occur in June and July, when larvae and nymphs are most active.

Avoid the Enemy

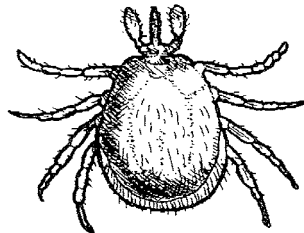
Nobody likes to be bitten by ticks, and these suggestions apply to avoiding all ticks, including deer ticks.

1. Steer clear of marshy areas, and minimize your contact with high grass, brush and woody shrubs.

The Tick



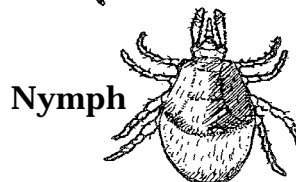
Adult
Female



Adult
Male



Larva



Nymph

2. Wear long pants and tuck them into your socks to prevent ticks from crawling up your legs. Tick researchers wind duct tape around the sock/pant junction to keep ticks out.
3. Wear long sleeves and tuck your shirt into your pants to keep ticks from climbing up your torso.
4. Wear light coloured clothing so you can spot ticks more easily.
5. At least once a day, do a tick check. Think small, the size of a small freckle or a poppy seed. Check the backs of knees, groin, armpits, neck and back. Shower and scrub well.

6. Check your pets. Your cat or dog could bring ticks into the house. If you have an outdoor pet, make sure it wears a flea and tick collar. Wash and comb your pet regularly.
7. Collecting wood or sitting on logs in the woods or in your yard has shown to be one of the easiest ways to get ticks on you.
8. Know your tick! Get information from local health units on what ticks are found in your area. Deer tick larvae and nymphs are extremely small with reddish orange bodies and black heads.

How to Remove a Tick

Embedded ticks should only be removed using fine-tipped tweezers. **DO NOT** use fingers to pull out tick. **DO NOT** use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish or other products.

Grasp the tick firmly and as closely to the skin as possible with the tip of the tweezers. With a steady motion, pull the tick's body away from the skin. Take care not to crush it. Cleanse the area with an antiseptic. Put the tick in a ziplock baggie with a damp paper towel and call the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation. Visit www.canlyme.org for more information.

Once the tick's body is gone, it can no longer transmit disease. The bacteria that cause Lyme Disease are contained in the tick's midgut or salivary glands. Seek medical attention immediately.

If you develop a rash or flu-like symptoms in the following weeks or month, seek medical treatment.

Be Prepared

Lyme Disease is a serious health problem. Your principal defense is protection, knowledge and if exposed, early medical treatment. Review tick information and precautionary measures with your youth and be prepared for this year's tick season. X