



County of Santa Cruz



Office of the Agricultural Commissioner Mosquito and Vector Control CSA 53

640 Capitola Road, Santa Cruz, California 95062
(831) 454-2590 Fax (831) 464-9161 Internet www.agdept.com
Juan Hidalgo, Agricultural Commissioner Paul L. Binding, Manager

Date: October 31, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUBJECT: TICKS AND DISEASE RISK

CONTACT: PAUL BINDING (831) 454-2590

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY AND STATE OF CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES CAUTION RESIDENTS ABOUT TICKS AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES

SANTA CRUZ – These monsters are out to suck your blood long after Halloween is over!

Winter is a time of high adult tick activity in our coastal hills and residents should be aware when spending time outdoors. Santa Cruz County Mosquito and Vector Control (SCCMVC) staff and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) collaborate to collect and test ticks in the County. Approximately 2% of adult Western black-legged ticks tested in recent years contain the bacteria that can cause Lyme disease. In 2017, there have been 12 reported cases of Lyme disease in Santa Cruz County so far, which is above the annual average of eight.

Santa Cruz County Mosquito and Vector Control plans to conduct surveys for tick species and submit them to the CDPH for testing. Because of known disease risks and newly discovered agents like *Borrelia miyamotoi*, similar to the bacteria that causes Lyme disease, residents are advised to take precautions to protect themselves from tick bites.

Adult ticks climb to the tips of vegetation in cooler months (fall through spring), often alongside trails or paths, and attach themselves to hosts, such as deer, pets or humans that brush against them. Immature ticks (nymphs) are found in spring and summer on tree trunks, fallen logs, wooden benches and in leaf litter and feed on smaller animals, but they will also attach to people and pets. Ticks feed by sticking their mouthparts into the skin of their host and sucking blood. **Removing a tick shortly after it attaches (less than 24 hours) can prevent transmission of Lyme diseases and other tick-borne diseases.**

The risk of being bitten by ticks may be reduced with the following precautions:

- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Avoid tick habitat by staying in the middle of a trails and avoid logs, tree trunks, trail margins, brush and grassy areas.

- Inspect yourself frequently while in tick habitat. Once out of tick habitat, it is recommended that you shower and thoroughly check your entire body. Parents should examine their children, especially on the scalp and hairline.
- Keep your pets on trails as well, and check and remove ticks after time outdoors.
- Use EPA-registered repellent for use against ticks; always follow label directions. Products with a concentration of 20% DEET or higher, and/or treating clothes and shoes with permethrin before entering tick habitat are recommended.
- Shower and launder clothes soon after activity in tick habitat.

To reduce the possibility of infection, remove attached ticks as soon as possible. Gently and firmly grasp the tick close to the head and pull it straight out, preferably with a tick tool or with fine-pointed tweezers. Save the tick for identification. Ticks should be kept alive by placing the tick into a sealable bag or container with a moist cotton ball in a refrigerator or cooler. The person removing the tick should wash their hands before and after removal and apply antiseptic to the bite area. Insecticides, Vaseline, lighted matches or gasoline should not be used to remove ticks because these techniques are ineffective or unsafe.

Consult your healthcare provider if you have been bitten by a tick or were in an area where ticks occur and are concerned about Lyme disease. Painful redness that occurs less than 24 hours after a tick bite and does not expand is likely a local allergic reaction to the tick bite. Early Lyme disease can include flu-like symptoms and often an expanding, painless rash. Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics and most patients recover without complications, particularly when the disease is diagnosed early. If left untreated, Lyme disease can progress to arthritis and in some cases serious nervous system problems.



“Bullseye” rash of a patient infected with Lyme disease. Note that this rash does not always occur when someone is infected—it is important to look out for flu-like symptoms and check yourself for ticks.



Western black-legged ticks. Pictured from left to right: nymph, adult male, adult female. (Photo courtesy of CDPH).

The Santa Cruz County Mosquito and Vector Control District can help with tick identification M-F, 8am-3pm.

Contact information:

Phone: (831) 454-2590

Email: Pesthelp@agdept.com

Website: www.agdept.com under “Mosquito abatement/Vector Control”

Office Located: 870 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz

Also visit: www.cdph.ca.gov for more information on ticks and tick-borne diseases.

Keep Ticks Off You



Repel



- ◆ Use **bug repellents** with at least **20% DEET** on all exposed skin.
- ◆ Follow directions and reapply as needed.
- ◆ Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding hands, eyes, and mouth.

- ✓ Avoid logs and areas with high grass or fallen leaves
- ✓ Walk in the center of trails

- ◆ Wear long sleeves and pants when possible.
- ◆ Treat clothes and shoes with **permethrin** that kills ticks. This remains protective through several washings. Pre-treated clothing is available and may be protective longer.

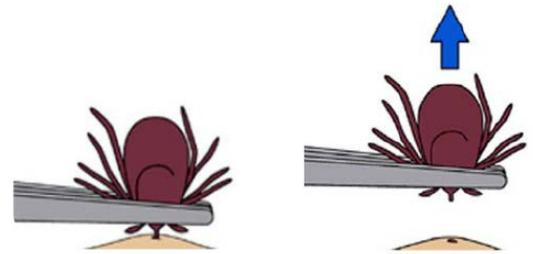


Remove

If you find a tick crawling on you, brush it off.
If you find a tick attached to your skin, remove it quickly.

- ◆ Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
- ◆ Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick.
- ◆ After removing the tick, clean the bite area and wash your hands with soap and water.

- ✓ Ways to dispose of a live tick:
 - ◆ Flush it down the toilet, or
 - ◆ Submerge it in alcohol, or
 - ◆ Place it in a sealed bag/container
- ✓ Never crush a tick with your fingers



Shower



- ◆ Bathe and shower within two hours or as soon as possible after leaving an area with ticks to wash off ticks and to find them more easily.
- ◆ Do a full body check using a mirror to view all parts of your body. Ticks are usually found:
 - ✓ Under arms
 - ✓ In and around the ears
 - ✓ Inside the belly button
 - ✓ Behind the knees
 - ✓ Between the legs
 - ✓ On the scalp
- ◆ Parents should check their children for ticks.

- ✓ Tumble unwashed clothes in the dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill remaining ticks.
- ✓ Examine gear and pets. Ticks can hitchhike into homes.