

The Extension Connection

By Megan Vig

With warmer spring weather, ticks are starting to get active and looking for hosts to feed on. This week I share information from Janet Knodel, NDSU Extension Entomologist.

Two common ticks in North Dakota include the smaller black legged tick (or deer tick), *Ixodes scapularis*, and the larger dog ticks, *Dermacentor variabilis*. *Ixodes scapularis* is the tick species that vectors Lyme Disease. Ticks can be a significant threat to anyone's health if you enjoy outdoor activities in undisturbed grassy or wooded areas. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following strategies for preventing tick bites:

Minimizing direct contact with ticks by avoiding woody and high grass areas and walking in center of trails, if possible. Ticks are most active in May through August in North Dakota.

Use repellent with 20 to 30% DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide) on exposed skin and clothing. This should provide several hours of protection. Or wear clothing treated with permethrin.

Quickly find and remove any ticks from the body by using a tweezers. Grasp tick close to skin and pull straight up to avoid breaking off the tick's mouthparts in the skin. Clean bite area with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.

Inspect and bath yourself within 2 hours after coming indoors to find any ticks crawling on you and to remove them before they attach to feed on your blood. Ticks like to hide in hair, armpits and other areas that may be difficult to inspect.

Wash any clothing that you were wearing soon and then dry in high heat for an hour to kill any ticks. Otherwise, ticks can attach to you later after hitchhiking on your clothes into your home.

Reduce tick habitat around your home by keeping lawns mowed around the home area; placing a 3 foot wide barrier of wood chips or gravel between lawns, patio or play areas and wooded areas to prevent tick movement; and exclude wildlife (especially deer) that may be carrying ticks into your yard.

Some insecticides registered for control of ticks by homeowners in residential areas include: carbonyl (Sevin®), cyfluthrin (Tempo®, Powerforce™), permethrin (Astro®, Ortho® products, Bonide® products), and pyrethrin (Pyrenone®, Kicker®). Always read and follow the EPA approved label on the product container.

The CDC reports that Lyme disease was the sixth most common national notifiable disease in 2015 and about 300,000 people contract Lyme disease each year. Black legged tick (deer tick) vectors Lyme disease and is concentrated in 14 states in the Northeast and upper Midwest regions. The North Dakota Department of Health confirmed Lyme disease in seven counties last year. Counties include Barnes, Burleigh, Cass, Grand Forks, McIntosh, Stark and Ward counties.

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Symptoms of Lyme disease includes: Bull's eye rash, headache, fever and fatigue. In a worst case scenario, infections can cause arthritic joints, and affect the nervous system causing facial paralysis, and spinal cord, brain or heart problems. Lyme disease must be treated immediately with antibiotics. It can take 2 to 3 weeks for recovery if treated early. The later you wait for treatment, your symptoms will become more severe and difficult to cure. For more information, refer to <http://www.cdc.gov/Lyme>.