Treeways

2017 -3

Preventing Tick Borne Diseases

Ticks pass on diseases by biting people so checking for ticks after outside activity is a priority. A tick must be attached for at least 24 hours before it can transit Lyme disease, but Anaplasmosis and Babesiosis may be transmitted in less than 24 hours after tick attachment. The blacklegged tick (deer tick), Ixodes scapularis, the vector that transmits these diseases is found in Sunfish Lake and throughout Minnesota. **A number of our neighbors and their pets have contracted Lyme disease within the city limits of Sunfish Lake.**

The blacklegged tick adult is tiny, only about 1/10th of an inch long, and the nymph stage is even smaller (about the size of a poppy seed). Ticks typically wait on vegetation near lawn edges, near woodland pathways, or in woodlands to grab onto a potential host as the person walks by. Risk of tick bites is highest during spring, summer and fall and tick-borne diseases peak during June through August. Ticks can be active anytime during the year when temperatures are above 32 degrees. Mushroom hunters should be especially aware of ticks.

Prevent contact with ticks by walking near the center of trails and avoiding tall grass areas. Wear light colored protective clothing and tuck in your pants into your socks. Light colored clothing makes it easier to spot ticks. Use the repellent DEET (N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) on skin or clothing. The insecticide permethrin will kill ticks and is also an effective repellent when applied to clothing (**only apply permethrin to clothing!)** Permethrin, labeled to apply to clothing, will last through several washings and is available at Home Depot and other local retailers.

Check with your doctor if you have been bitten and remove the tick immediately by grabbing its head with a pointed tweezers and slowly pull it out. Do not use a hot match head to get the tick to let go its attachment. Save the tick in a Ziploc bag for identification.

Lyme Disease is a bacterial disease, caused by Borrelia burgdorferi; Anaplasmosis is caused by bacteria that infects white blood cells; and Babesiosis is caused by a protozoan that infects red blood cells. Both Anaplasmosis and Babesiosis are increasing in frequency and are more likely to occur in people with compromised immune systems. For additional information check the Minnesota Lyme Association website at: www.mnlyme.org or the Minnesota Department of Health.

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