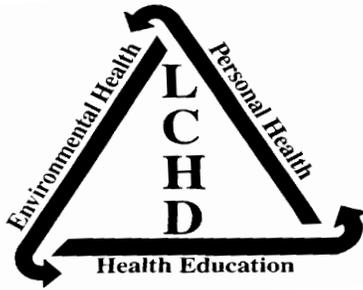


MEDIA RELEASE



Date: May 21, 2020
To: All Media
From: LaSalle County Health Department
717 Etna Road
Ottawa, IL 61350
Contact: Jenny Barrie (ext. 74315)
Leslie Dougherty (ext. 74314)
Phone: (815) 433-3366
For Immediate Release

OTTAWA – In observance of Lyme Disease Awareness month and the warmer weather our area has been experiencing, it's important to take precautions against tick bites and the illnesses they can carry. Illnesses like Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Lyme disease, tularemia, and ehrlichiosis can cause mild symptoms or severe infections. In LaSalle County, Lyme disease is the tick-related illness seen most commonly. There were 7 cases of Lyme disease confirmed in the county in 2019.

YEAR	NUMBER OF HUMAN CASES
2014	5
2015	6
2016	2
2017	2
2018	4
2019	7

Last summer, the Health Department participated as a partner in the I-TICK (Illinois Tick Inventory Collaboration Network) program that engages citizens across Illinois in helping gather data on ticks. Because ticks carry a number of diseases that affect people and animals, the data and ticks collected through this program help with surveillance to determine the risk of disease in our area and throughout Illinois. In addition, Health Department staff assisted the University of Illinois as they conducted tick drags which confirmed the presence of Lyme Disease in the county.

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. The risk of exposure to ticks is greatest in the woods and in the edge area between lawns and woods; however, ticks can also be carried by animals onto lawns and gardens and into houses by pets. Campers, hikers, outdoor workers, and others may be exposed to infected ticks in wooded, brushy, and grassy places. People who spend time in heavily wooded areas where infected ticks are common are at higher risk for exposure.

“Tick exposure can occur year-round, but ticks are more active during warmer months (April- September). Frequent tick checks increase the likelihood of finding a tick before it can transmit disease. While antibiotics can treat illnesses due to bites, it's best to avoid tick exposure altogether by taking some simple precautions,” says Chris Pozzi, Director of Environmental Health at LaSalle County Health Department.

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Simple tips to avoid tick exposure include:

- Wear light-colored, protective clothing—long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, boots or sturdy shoes and a head covering. Tuck long pants into socks and boots.
- Apply insect repellent containing 10 percent to 30 percent DEET primarily to clothes.
- Use products that contain permethrin to treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks and sleeping tents. Or look for clothing pre-treated with permethrin.
- Walk in the center of trails so weeds do not brush against you.
- Check yourself, children, other family members and pets for ticks every two to three hours (especially ears, hair, neck, legs and between the toes).
- Check outdoor pets often for ticks. Ticks can “hitch a ride” on pets and into your home. Tick collars, sprays, shampoos, or monthly “top spot” medications help protect pets against ticks.

If you find a tick attached to your skin, there's no need to panic. Remove the tick as soon as possible to reduce your chances of getting an infection from the tick bite. The CDC recommends the following steps to remove a tick:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure to remove the tick. Avoid twisting or jerking. If the mouthparts remain in the skin, leave them alone. In most cases, they will fall out in a few days.

Don't use nail polish, petroleum jelly, or a hot match to make the tick detach.

3. Clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.

If you become ill with a fever and/or rash after being in an area where ticks may be, please contact your health care provider. The most common symptoms of tick-related illnesses can include fever, chills, aches, pains, and rash (not in all cases). Early recognition and treatment of the infection decreases the risk of serious complications.

For additional information, please contact the LaSalle County Health Department at 815-433-3366 or visit their website at www.lasallecounty.org. Also, please visit the Illinois Department of Public Health's (IDPH) interactive tick surveillance map created by their Vector Control staff. The map shows what ticks have been identified in Illinois by county, in addition to the diseases they were tested for and number of positive results.

<https://idph.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=976061db733441eb977ef5cf2facd5c4>

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