



Ixodes scapularis commonly known as deer ticks are blood sucking arachnids that are a main vector of Lyme disease microbes. Adult females are the size of a sesame seed and have reddish hind bodies and black dorsal markings while

The Life Cycle of a Deer Tick

Deer ticks live about two years and go through four life phases: egg, larva, nymph, and adult. They feed exclusively on animal blood and eat only three times during their lives: once to molt from larva to nymph; once from nymph to adult; and once as adults to lay eggs. They can contract the bacteria that causes Lyme disease from an infected host at any of these feedings, but transmit it only during the second or third. They must remain attached for at least 24 hours for the bacteria to transmit.

Where to Find Them

Ticks are small and can be easy to miss, especially if they've latched themselves onto a hairy pet or a spot on a human that's hard to reach or see, such as the top of the head or back.

Ticks are more prevalent in tall grass and wooded areas inhabited by large animals, such as deer.

The loathsome deer tick, also known as the black-legged tick, is defined more by the disease it spreads than by its own characteristics. Deer ticks, a name that came about due to its habit of parasitizing white-tailed deer, are transmitters or vectors for Lyme disease microbes that they acquire by feeding on infected mice and rodents. Lyme disease, if untreated can cause a variety of health issues including facial paralysis, heart palpitations, arthritis, severe headaches, and neurological disorders. According to the CDC, Lyme disease is currently one of the fastest-growing and most commonly reported vector-borne diseases in the United States. More than 14,000 cases are reported annually, but because the symptoms so closely resemble the flu and usually go away without treatment, scientists estimate as many as nine out of every ten cases go unreported.

Prevention

If hiking through the woods, remember to walk in the center of trails to avoid ticks. While most people may be aware of deer ticks, which carry Lyme disease and are found in the Northeast region of the country, it's important to remember that different species of ticks are found across the U.S. and that they carry a variety of other diseases.

Before heading out, dress in long sleeves and pants and consider tucking pant legs into socks, especially if you will be walking in tall grass or wooded areas. Also, use a tick repellent containing DEET, following the manufacturer's instructions. For prolonged outdoor activities such as camping, look for clothing and camping gear that is treated with permethrin.

Upon returning home from a walk through the woods, time in the garden or camping, it's important to perform a thorough tick check - from head to toe. If you find a tick on your body, remove it with a slow, steady pull so as not to break off the mouthparts and leave them in the skin. Then wash hands and bite site thoroughly with soap and water. Flush ticks down the toilet or wrap them tightly in tissue before disposing in a closed receptacle. If you suspect a tick bite, seek medical attention as soon as possible.

For more information visit:

<http://csetompkins.org/environment/invasive-nuisance-species/invasive-pests/deer-tick>

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/bugs/deer-tick/>

<http://www.pestworld.org/news-hub/pest-articles/the-year-of-the-tick/>

