

June 4, 2022

Be Aware Of Ticks

Every year I get many calls and inquiries regarding ticks and the concerns with ticks. Today, maybe more than ever ticks and tick-vectored disease are major concerns to humans, companion animals and livestock in Ohio. We have gone from one medically important tick twenty years ago in Ohio to five now, adding two in the past couple of years. This year, the tick population statewide is expected to continue to rise in Ohio. According to Tim McDermott, an educator with Ohio State University Extension, the outreach arm of The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES), global climate change and tick-host range expansion are some reasons for the increase. McDermott notes ticks are extraordinarily adaptable and can travel on host animals, expanding their habitat range, moving to new locations.

Because of increased populations and several types of ticks, McDermott suggests every year going forward has the potential to be bad, and folks should go into each tick season thinking about how you can keep you and your family tick-safe.

He notes that 20 years ago, the American dog tick was the only tick in Ohio that was of medical importance to humans, companion animals, and livestock. Now, there are five ticks in Ohio that are concerns, including the American dog tick, the blacklegged tick (also known as the deer tick), the Lone Star tick, and most recently both the Asian longhorned tick, and the Gulf Coast tick, both of which were first confirmed in Ohio in 2020.

With the rising tick population comes the risk of contracting tickborne illnesses such as anaplasmosis, babesiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and Lyme disease. And in some cases, in some people, Lone Star ticks can cause an allergy to red meat after the person is bitten by the tick.

In Ohio, ticks are most active from April through September, although they can be active any time of the year. There can be a misconception of encountering ticks only when in the woods. Ticks can be found in a pasture, hayfield, or even your backyard lawn.

McDermott said that while the risk of encountering ticks in Ohio is high, and the number of ticks that are carrying disease is high, there are things people can do to keep themselves safe. One way to control ticks is through proper management of their habitat.

Keep your yard mowed, and do not allow brush or leaf litter to accumulate. Remove brush, tall weeds, and grass in order to eliminate the habitat of rodents and other small mammals, which serve as hosts for ticks as well as serve as prime tick habitat.

To prevent tick bites when in areas where ticks might be active, McDermott recommends that you should do the following:

- Wear light-colored clothes, including a long-sleeved shirt tucked into your pants and long pants tucked into your socks or boots.
- Apply a tick repellent according to label instructions.
- Wear footwear and clothing that have been treated correctly with permethrin. These can be purchased through many outfitters and clothing companies.
- Do frequent tick checks of your body while outside and do a thorough inspection at shower time.
- Protect your pets with an anti-tick product recommended by a veterinarian.
- Keep dogs on a leash and avoid allowing them into weedy areas.

If you find a tick attached, do the following:

- Do not crush or puncture it.
- Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible using pointy tweezers, a tick removal tool, or your finger and thumb. Pull straight up and out with steady, even pressure.
- Thoroughly wash the bite site, your hands, and the tweezers or removal tool with warm soap and water.
- Place the tick in a container with rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer. Record the day the tick was likely to have attached.
- Take the specimen with you to a healthcare professional if you develop flu-like symptoms, a rash, or anything that is unusual for you.

McDermott suggests if you think you might have been exposed to a tick bite, contact your physician right away to get a diagnosis. It's very important to receive the appropriate treatment as soon as possible.

More information on ticks can be found at *Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases*, an Ohioline fact sheet (<https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/HYG-2073>) . Ohioline is OSU Extension's free online information resource and can be found at ohioline.osu.edu. If you have further questions or concerns stop by the Clinton County Extension Office at 111 S. Nelson Avenue, Wilmington, Call (937) 382-0901 or email at nye.1@osu.edu.



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