

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



May 3, 2010

Prevent Tick Bites: Prevent Lyme Disease



Summer time in the South is great! Outside working conditions are favorable and recreational opportunities are almost unlimited, but there is a down side to all this. It is the presence of the relentless tick, which sometimes results in the contraction of Lyme Disease if we don't take the proper precautions.

Lyme disease is spread by the tiny deer tick. They feed on blood, and infected ticks transmit the disease as they feed. The deer tick prefers wild animals, especially mice, birds, opossums, raccoon and deer. They also feed on livestock, dogs, cats and humans. People who visit or live in the area of deer tick habitats run a high risk of contracting Lyme disease.

For our own personal safety we should reorient ourselves each year with the habits and habitat of the deer ticks and learn to protect ourselves to prevent tick bites. If you know someone who has contracted Lyme disease, I promise it will make you think and take every precaution possible to avoid the disease. The after-effects can be very harmful and debilitating.

## FAVORITE TICK HABITATS –

Deer ticks prefer:

- ~Dense, thick woods with heavy undergrowth of shrubs and small trees. Surveys show that 85 percent are found in these areas.
- ~Edges of wooded areas where the lawns meet the trees.
- ~Birdbaths, bird feeders.
- ~Woodpiles, brush piles, rock or stone walls.
- ~Tree houses out in the woods and around swing sets.

There are occupational and recreational factors that we must consider in order to protect ourselves. Most everyone in the outside environment is susceptible. This includes landscapers, utility line workers, farmers, freshwater fishermen, women, campers, hunters, bikers and others.

Lawns are not too susceptible, as they are cut regularly and are too hot and dry for ticks to sustain life. The most ideal conditions for ticks to find an animal host are cool, moist areas.

## PERSONAL PROTECTION –

Following are some precautions that we can take to prevent tick bites:

- Wear light colored clothing (ticks show up easier)
- Wear long pants with the cuffs tucked into your socks
- Avoid tall grass and shrubby areas, when possible
- Widen trails through the woods
- Remove brush piles
- Keep your yard mowed
- Clear out vegetation in wooded areas
- Use tick repellent

Ted Gordon - Risk Mgmt. / Loss Control Mgr.  
MAFES / MSU-ES (662)566-2201  
Excerpts: [www.cdc.gov/nasd](http://www.cdc.gov/nasd)  
12/9/2009

## TICK IDENTIFICATIONS –

70 percent of Lyme disease cases occur from the bite of an immature (nymph) deer tick:

- **Before feeding** – They are the size of a poppy seed with a dark head and translucent body.
- **After Feeding** – They swell and appear dark and round, about the size of a mustard seed.

## Adult Ticks:

- **Before Feeding** – They are the size of a sesame seed. The females have a black head and brick red abdomen.
- **After Feeding** – They turn gray and swell to the size of a sunflower seed kernel.

Ticks can remain active all year, as long as the temperature stays above 35 degrees F.

## FINDING AND REMOVING TICKS –

As we mentioned earlier, ticks like shrubby vegetation. The nymphs thrive on 4" to 6" vegetation and the adults like waist high brushes; then they wait for an animal to brush by. They will grasp the animal's fur and crawl up the body. They will spend 30 to 60 minutes crawling around before inserting their mouthparts and beginning to feed. All recommendations tell us to remove the ticks with tweezers.

I've been accustomed to using a match and letting them back out. This is totally wrong. It is recommended to refrain from using matches, nail polish, alcohol, etc. because it can cause them to regurgitate their gut contents. The contents could very well include the Lyme disease bacterium.

## TICK CONTROL –

Most repellants contain the active ingredient permethrin (Duranon, Permethrin Tick Repellent, Permanone), or N-Diethyl-met-toluidide, usually called DEET (Off, Cutters, Muskol, etc). Follow the label directions: Apply until the clothing is damp or allow to dry. Researchers say that granular insecticides work better and longer than sprays.

Below are some insecticides that you might consider using:

- SEVIN (carbaryl)
- PREMETHRIN (a pyrethroid)
- DURSBAN (chlorpyrifos)
- DIAZINON (spectride)

If liquid pesticides are used, the vegetation should be sprayed until it is saturated and the insecticide is running off. The best time for applying is mid-May to early June.

**EXPECTED THE UNEXPECTED  
SAFETY SHOULD NEVER BE NEGLECTED!**

\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\*

**~BE AWARE-TAKE CARE~**