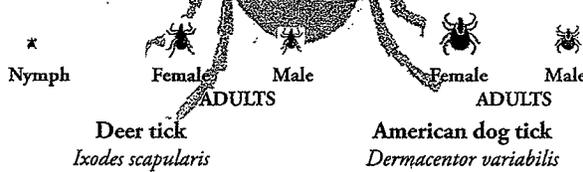


DEER TICKS AND LYME DISEASE

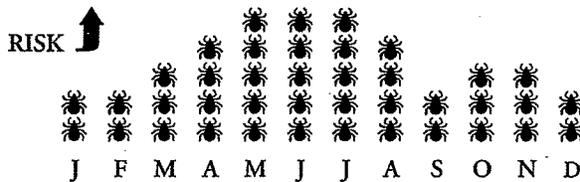
The deer tick (also known as the blacklegged tick) is found throughout Massachusetts and may be infected with germs that cause human diseases, including LYME DISEASE (LD).

TWO PRINCIPAL TICKS OF MASSACHUSETTS

Two important tick species in the state are the deer tick and the American dog tick, both pictured below at their actual sizes for comparison. Only the deer tick spreads the germ that causes LD; the American dog tick does not, but may spread germs that cause other less common illnesses, such as tularemia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.



The deer tick has a two-year life cycle that includes three blood-feeding stages known as the larva, nymph and adult. Both nymph (young) and adult deer ticks can be infected with the LD germ and may take blood meals from humans. The risk of getting LD (see below) is highest when the nymph stage is feeding, which is generally from May through July. Nymphs are very difficult to see and are active during warm weather months when people are busy outdoors. Adult ticks are most active during the spring and fall, but may be active anytime the temperature is above freezing. Thus, there is a risk of a deer tick bite throughout the year.



Deer ticks are usually found near the ground within wooded, brushy or grassy areas. Depending on where you live, you may find ticks in your own yard. Ticks do not jump, fly or drop from trees, but grasp passing animals or people from the leaf litter or tips of grass.

PREVENTION BEGINS WITH YOU

If you live, work or play in an area likely to have ticks, use a repellent with DEET or PERMETHRIN.

Talk to your veterinarian about tick control options for your pet. Wear long, light-colored pants tucked into socks or boots, and a long-sleeved shirt. This may be difficult to do when the weather is hot, but it will help keep ticks away from your skin and make it easier to spot a tick on your clothing. Stay on trails when walking or hiking, avoiding the edge of the trail where ticks are more likely to be. Even after taking these precautions, when you return indoors, it is still very important to check yourself, your kids and pets for ticks. Ticks prefer dark, moist places so always check the back of the knees, armpits, groin, scalp, back of the neck and behind the ears.

TICK REMOVAL

Ticks must usually be attached for at least 24 hours before they spread the germ that causes LD. It is therefore very important to remove a tick as soon as you find it. Do not use petroleum jelly, gasoline, nail polish remover, etc., to dislodge the tick. Instead, remove the tick by grasping it near the head with fine-tipped tweezers and pulling straight out with steady pressure. After someone removes an attached tick from their body, they should watch for the appearance of any type of rash, fever or flu-like symptoms over the next month. The person should immediately seek the advice of a health care provider if any symptoms occur, especially if the tick was attached for more than 24 hours.

LYME DISEASE

The most common disease spread by ticks in Massachusetts is LD. For most people, the early stage of LD begins with an expanding, circular red rash near the site of the tick bite. Other symptoms of early LD may include headache, fatigue, muscle or joint pain, fever and chills. If untreated, the disease can affect different areas of the body including the joints, heart or nervous system.

In addition to LD, deer ticks may also spread germs that cause babesiosis and human granulocytic anaplasmosis (also known as human granulocytic ehrlichiosis or HGE).

MORE INFORMATION

Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH)
617-983-6800
www.mass.gov/dph

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov