

>> TOOLBOX TALK – Lyme Disease, Ticks, and their Removal

Lyme Disease

This is an emerging disease in Canada that is caused by the bite of an infected blacklegged tick (deer tick). The first known case to be contracted in Newfoundland was in August 2015, when a 4-year-old girl in Brigus was diagnosed with the disease after playing outside¹.

Lyme disease symptoms can appear quickly or gradually over time, and they are incredibly varied and can wax and wane (for a full list go to <http://canlyme.com/lyme-basics/symptoms/> - Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation). The first physical signs of Lyme infection are often flu-like symptoms – sore throat, headaches, congestion, stiffness, etc. – so many people, including doctors, dismiss the symptoms as the flu or the common cold.

During its nymph stage, a tick is only about the size of a period on a sentence. Many people are infected by nymph ticks, but don't suspect Lyme disease because they don't recall being bitten. In fact, 50% of people infected don't remember being bitten and **less than 50% of people will get any over-emphasized rash**².

Blacklegged/Deer Tick

These small ticks are found in Canada, including on the island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador. The preferred habitat for these ticks is tall grass, brush, and forested areas. Currently there are no areas in Newfoundland and Labrador that are believed to have permanent populations of blacklegged ticks. However, blacklegged ticks, including some infected with Lyme disease, are found each year around the province. These ticks likely arrive on migratory birds³.

Protection

While the risk of Lyme disease in Newfoundland and Labrador is considered low, residents are

encouraged to take preventive measures to protect themselves from tick bites.

To protect yourself from tick and insect bites:

- Use an insect repellent (always read product label directions before applying)
- Cover as much of your skin as possible, tuck pants legs into boots or socks
- Wear light-coloured clothing to be able to spot ticks on your clothes more easily
- Walk on well-travelled trails wherever possible to avoid grass, brush, or shrubs

Check yourself, your family and pets after being in an area where ticks may be present³.

Tick Removal

Grasp the tick with fine tweezers, as near to the skin as possible, and gently pull it straight out. Be careful not to squeeze the tick when removing it which could result in bacteria being injected into the body. Do not try to remove the tick with your fingers or attempt to remove with lighted cigarettes, matches, nail polish, or Vaseline.

Once removed, save the tick for identification in a small container with a lightly moistened cotton ball. Accurate identification is very important to know the risk associated with the bite and to support surveillance for this tick and Lyme disease.

Ticks from animals should be submitted for identification and Lyme disease assessment to the [Animal Health Laboratory](#) directly or through the regional offices of the [Animal Health Division](#)³.

Source:

1. [CBC News](#)
2. [Canada Lyme Disease Foundation](#)
3. [Forestry and Agrifoods Agency](#)

