



Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: November 28, 2017

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Subject: **RESIDENTS CAUTIONED TO AVOID TICK BITES**

WESTERN BLACK-LEGGED TICK ACTIVITY INCREASES

With the arrival of cool and wet weather, ticks of medical concern are now active again. Butte County residents need to be alert for ticks that may be carrying Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases. Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District's (District) recent surveillance activities on Chico's Bidwell Park trails and the Lake Oroville Recreation Area trails have identified increased populations of the western black-legged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*), sometimes referred to as the deer tick.

The District wants to remind residents to take precautions while hiking, camping, biking, and enjoying other outdoor activities. By taking measures to reduce exposure to ticks, residents can help protect themselves from tick-borne diseases.

Ticks are often found in naturally vegetated areas throughout Butte County. Ticks attach to animals and feed on their blood over several days. Preferring cool and moist environments, ticks are found on grasses, shrubs, logs, branches, fallen leaves, and on wooden picnic tables.

An individual may become infected with the bacteria that causes Lyme disease when they are bitten by an infected western black-legged tick. The smaller immature form of the tick known as a "nymph" is most active during the spring and early summer months. About the size of a pinhead, nymphs are often found on logs, grasses, fallen branches or tree limbs, low-growing shrubs, and among damp leaves that accumulate under trees. Because nymphs are so small, people may not notice if one attaches to them.

Other tick-borne diseases include Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF), anaplasmosis, erlichiosis and babesiosis. The first line of defense against tick-borne diseases is taking precautions to avoid tick bites.

Most tick-borne diseases begin with flu-like symptoms that usually develop 2 to 14 days after being bitten. Some people with Lyme or RMSF disease develop a rash. If someone becomes ill with flu-like symptoms after spending time in tick areas or being bitten by a tick, see your doctor right away.

Here are some things to remember:

- Avoid areas where ticks live, such as trail margins, brushy and grassy areas, and leaf litter.
- Stay on trails and avoid contact with high grass and brush
- Wear light colors so ticks can be easily seen if they get on you
- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts when possible.
- Use insect repellent with at least 20% DEET on exposed skin and clothing. Always read and follow label directions when applying repellents.
- Treat your clothing, socks, and shoes/boots with permethrin. Permethrin kills any ticks that climb on your body.
- Pack a pair of tweezers or a tick removal tool when hiking in tick areas.
- Thoroughly check yourself and your children frequently for ticks, especially at the hairline and base of the scalp
- Routinely check pets for ticks and remove them promptly; check with your veterinarian for tick control products

Prompt removal of ticks may prevent disease transmission. To remove an attached tick, carefully grasp the tick with fine pointed tweezers as close to the skin as possible, and gently but firmly pull the tick straight out. Do not twist, burn or apply irritants to the tick, and avoid mashing or squeezing the body of the tick. Wash hands and the bite site with soap and water. To identify the tick (free of cost), place it in a jar or Ziploc bag with a piece of cotton or tissue moistened with water and bring the tick to the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District, 5117 Larkin Road, Oroville, CA. 95965, 533-6038 or 342-7350 or visit us on the web at www.BCMVCD.com.

For more information, free brochures, or to request an educational presentation on Lyme disease, please contact the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District at 533-6038 or 342-7350, or visit www.BCMVCD.com.