

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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## **Avoid Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases**

Summer time temperatures mean the increase in outdoor activities which ultimately means the increase in reports of tick-borne related diseases. There are three well-characterized tick-borne illnesses that are prevalent in Nebraska which include, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, ehrlichiosis, and tularemia. These diseases are believed to be greatly associated with two species of tick native to Nebraska: *Dermacentor variabilis*, the Rocky Mountain wood tick and *Amblyomma americanum*, the Texas Lone Star tick.

According to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Rocky Mountain spotted fever is reported in fewer than ten cases per year in Nebraska. Symptoms can include fever, headache, abdominal pain, and muscle pain. A rash can also develop within the first few days but be advised that in some people it never develops. Spotted fever needs to be treated by a doctor within the first few days of symptoms or it can become severe or fatal. Ehrlichiosis, transmitted by the Lone Star Tick, has varying symptoms which include severe malaise, fever, and headache. Symptoms can occur within 1-2 weeks of a bite. Tularemia has varying symptoms depending on how the disease is transferred. Symptoms can include fever, skin ulcers, swelling of lymph glands, eye irritation, or sore throat. If you suspect you have any of these symptoms from a tick bite, contact a doctor immediately to get treated.

Lyme disease, while caused by a tick species not prevalent in Nebraska, has been known to surface in occasional patients. Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, headache, fatigue, and a skin rash. Physicians who suspect Lyme disease need to contact local Public Health Departments immediately for diagnostic work-up.

People can pick up ticks from hikes outdoors in tall weeds and grasses and in heavily wooded areas. You can also come into contact with ticks from dogs, cats, or other pets who are frequently outdoors.

To prevent tick bites you can take the following preventative measures:

- Using insect repellent with at least 20% or more DEET
- Remove ticks promptly
- Wear long pants and tuck pants in socks when hiking or camping
- Wear closed toe shoes

You should always check yourself and pets when coming in from the outdoors for ticks that might have been missed. Ticks can hide on clothes as well. Some ticks can be as small as a pin-head and easy to miss. Shower within two hours of being outdoors where you can then check areas such as behind the knee, in the hair, and around the ears.

To remove a tick, the Center for Disease Control suggests using fine-tipped tweezers and grasping the tick as close to the mouth and your skin as possible. Pull upward with a steady motion and even pressure, do not twist the tick or jerk as this can cause the mouth to stay on the skin. After removing the tick clean the bite area thoroughly with rubbing alcohol, iodine scrub, or soapy water. You can dispose of a live tick by submersing it in alcohol, putting it into a sealed container, wrapping it lightly in tape, or flushing it, but you should never attempt to crush it with your hands.

For more information on tick-borne disease prevention, visit [www.pphd.org](http://www.pphd.org) or contact Cervantes at 308-487-3600 ext. 108. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.