

MANITOBA **FARM SAFETY**

Facts on Ticks and Lyme Disease



Contact Us

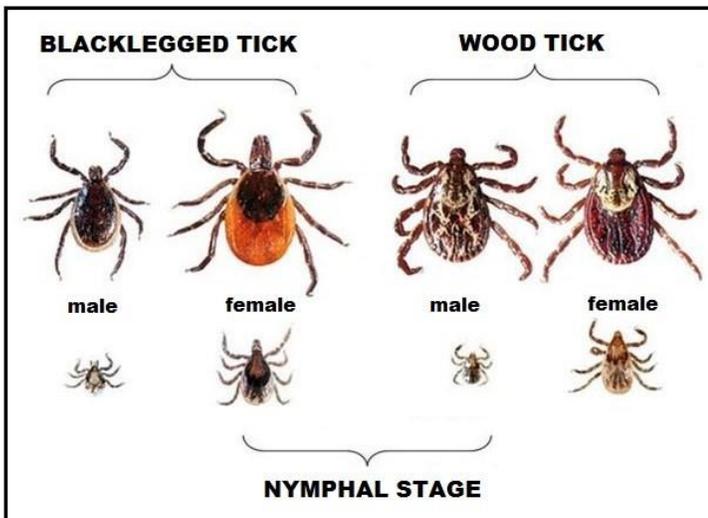
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Lyme disease is transmitted by a bite from a blacklegged tick carrying the **Borrelia bacteria**, though not all blacklegged ticks carry the bacteria. Wood ticks cannot transmit Lyme disease, and a blacklegged tick must be latched on for a minimum of 72 hours to transmit the borrelia bacteria.



As per the diagram to the left, adult female blacklegged ticks are typically larger - about the size of a sesame seed - and are distinguishable by a black round “shield” behind their head. Unlike the larger, more common reddish-coloured wood tick, adult blacklegged ticks do not have any silver markings on their backs and are a more brown-orange color.

The blacklegged tick’s nymphal stage is the stage most likely to infect people with Lyme disease, and occurs during the spring and early summer months. This is due to their small size which prevents people from promptly noticing and removing them from their bodies. Usually symptoms of Lyme disease develop around one month after being exposed to an infected blacklegged tick.

Symptoms

The most common symptom is a target-like rash with the centre (or “bullseye”) being where the tick would have latched. This may not be obvious though, as ticks prefer the hairline, armpit and groin area.

A second rash of the same appearance and location typically occurs a few weeks after the first, but is more obvious as it spreads across the body. Joint pain and swelling are the other common symptoms.

Lyme disease is very treatable with an excellent response to antibiotics. Your doctor can order a simple blood test to determine if you have Lyme disease, and if a rash is present (within one month of infected tick exposure), this test yields more sensitive results.



Preventative measures and proper removal

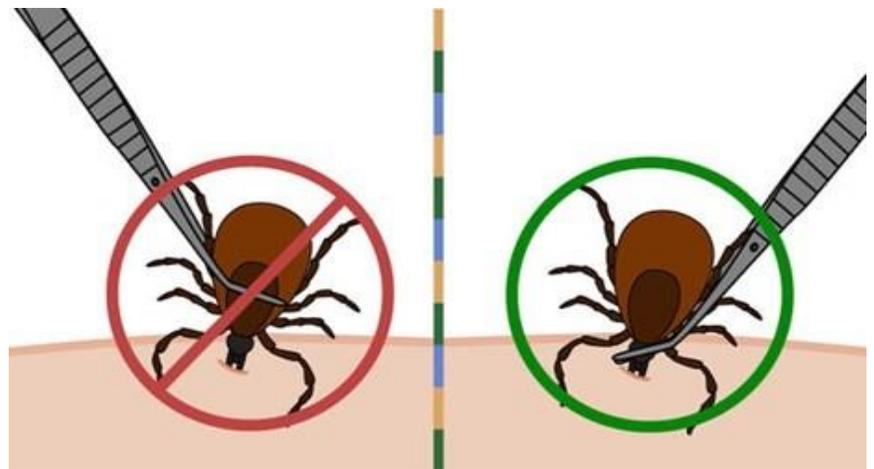
Insect repellent should be applied every four hours to ensure its effectiveness. DEET is the recommended repellent for ticks and should be reapplied every four hours to ensure its effectiveness. Apply the repellent over the entire body with particular attention on the foot and leg area. When walking in grassy and/or wooded areas, close toed shoes and long pants tucked into socks should be worn to reduce the chances of a tick reaching your skin.

You should also wear light coloured clothing so that ticks are most visible and have partner check your clothes through the day. Frequent showers are also recommended.

A tick must be attached for at least 72 hours to transmit the *Borrelia* bacteria as the bacteria needs time to migrate from the tick's gut to its salivary glands. Because of this delay, prompt detection and removal of ticks is one of the key methods of preventing Lyme disease.

Remove the tick as close as possible to the skin using a pair of tweezers. Do not squeeze a tick by the body, or panic and smack it. When startled, ticks will expel saliva which may contain dangerous bacteria or pathogens.

Once removed, swab the area with alcohol. One of the most effective ways to defend your own yard and land against ticks is keeping grass short and other vegetation groomed. Whether by livestock grazing, or mowing, the goal is to reduce the places ticks can thrive.



Top Prevention Tips

1. **Reduce tick habitat by keeping grass low via grazing or mowing in and around work areas**
2. **Repel ticks with DEET insect repellent**
3. **Wear light coloured, full coverage clothing and have a partner check for ticks frequently**
4. **Remove ticks by the head using tweezers, and do not squeeze or swat them**
5. **Perform a full body check daily for ticks paying special attention to hair line, groin, armpit area**

If you suspect you have found a blacklegged tick, you can submit a photo to Manitoba's Blacklegged Tick Passive Surveillance Program using their **online tool**. Their staff will review the image to determine if it is a blacklegged tick and contact you with further instructions. Note that the purpose of the passive surveillance program is meant to gain further information about the distribution of blacklegged tick populations, not to inform a clinical diagnosis.