How Can I Avoid Ticks Carrying Lyme Disease?

LAKE HOME & CABIN KIT • SECOND EDITION

About Ticks
Ticks can be of heightened concern when you’re staying at your cabin or lake home since they’re most often found in open fields, grass, shrubs, brush, and other vegetation. There are 13 known species of ticks in Minnesota; the most potentially dangerous and one of the most common is the blacklegged tick.

Blacklegged Ticks and Lyme Disease
Blacklegged (formerly Deer) ticks are hard-bodied, measuring only about 1/8-inch in adulthood. The female is reddish-brown with a black round area behind the head and the male is brown. Their preferred hosts are white-footed mice and white-tailed deer, but they also feed on birds and mammals, including humans. They are potential carriers of Lyme disease, a serious and complex inflammatory disease. While most cases occur in June and July, Lyme disease has been reported in Minnesota from February through November. People bitten by a Lyme disease-infected tick often, though not always, develop a red skin lesion. The lesion expands to form a large, bright red ring with a clear center that is often hot to touch. Other symptoms at the onset could include malaise, fatigue, chills, fever, headache, myalgia (muscle pain), sore throat, nausea, or vomiting. Several days to a month later arthritis, cardiac abnormalities, or other sicknesses can develop. See a doctor immediately if you think you’ve been bitten by an infected tick.

How to Remove a Tick
Using tissue or tweezers, grab the tick as closely as possible to the skin of the host (animal or human); avoid squeezing its abdomen. Then gently but firmly pull the tick off. Treat the wound with an antiseptic such as iodine. Never destroy a tick by crushing it between your fingers, since this can cause infection.

How to Avoid Blacklegged Ticks
- Keep grass and vegetation short in walkways and activity areas around your lake home or cabin.
- Wear protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts and long pants when walking in tick-prone areas. Tuck your pants inside your socks for added protection. Stay on trails if possible to avoid walking through grassy areas.
- Check yourself and your pet for ticks after returning inside.
- On humans, effective repellants include DEET® and Permanone®. DEET® can be applied to both clothing and skin; Permanone® can be applied to clothing only. Spray socks, trouser cuffs, pant legs, and parts of clothing that may brush tall grasses. If the clothing is not washed the repellant remains effective for several wearings.
- On pets, use a repellant containing the active ingredient permethrin. It not only repels fleas on dogs but also kills ticks.

Want to know more?
INFORMATION ON THE WEB
www.extension.umn.edu/environment
www.dnr.state.mn.us/insects/deerticks/index.html

Source: University of Minnesota Extension Service Faculty.