

# County of Santa Cruz



Office of the Agricultural Commissioner  
Mosquito and Vector Control CSA 53  
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Date: December 19, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUBJECT: TICKS AND DISEASE RISK

CONTACT: PAUL BINDING (831) 454-2590

## SANTA CRUZ COUNTY AND STATE OF CALIFORNIA PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES CAUTION RESIDENTS ABOUT TICKS AND TICK-BORNE DISEASES

**Santa Cruz, CA – 19 December 2019** – Officials at Santa Cruz County Mosquito and Vector Control (SCCMVC) remind residents that winter is the season for the western black-legged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*). This tick is the primary vector of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses in Santa Cruz County. “Winter is a time of high adult tick activity in our coastal hills and residents should be aware when spending time outdoors”, says SCCMVC manager Paul Binding.

Results from the county’s 2018/2019 tick-borne disease surveillance program indicate that approximately 2% of adult Western black-legged ticks tested are infected with the bacteria that can cause Lyme disease. This is consistent with previous years’ data from Santa Cruz County.

In 2019, there have been 12 reported cases of Lyme disease in Santa Cruz County so far. The annual average is also twelve.

The risk of being bitten by ticks may be reduced with the following precautions:

- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts.
- Walk in the center of trails and avoid logs, tree trunks, trail margins, brush and tall grass.
- Shower and thoroughly check your entire body for ticks after time outdoors. Parents should examine their children, especially on the scalp and hairline.
- Keep your pets on trails as well, and check and remove ticks after time outdoors.
- Use EPA-registered repellent for use against ticks; always follow label directions. Products with a concentration of 20% DEET or higher, and/or treating clothes and shoes with permethrin before entering tick habitat are recommended.
- Launder clothes (and dry on high heat) soon after activity in tick habitat.

**Removing a tick shortly after it attaches (less than 24 hours) can prevent transmission of Lyme diseases and other tick-borne diseases.**

To reduce the possibility of infection, remove attached ticks as soon as possible. Gently and firmly grasp the tick close to the head and pull it straight out, preferably with fine-pointed tweezers. Save the tick for identification. Ticks should be kept alive by placing the tick into a sealable bag or container with a moist cotton ball in a refrigerator or cooler. The person removing the tick should wash their hands before and after removal and apply antiseptic to the bite area. Insecticides, Vaseline, lighted matches or gasoline should **not** be used to remove ticks because these techniques are ineffective or unsafe.

Consult your healthcare provider if you have been bitten by a tick or were in an area where ticks occur and are concerned about Lyme disease. Painful redness that occurs less than 24 hours after a tick bite and does not expand is likely a local allergic reaction to the tick bite. Early Lyme disease can include flu-like symptoms and often an expanding, painless rash. Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics and most patients recover without complications, particularly when the disease is diagnosed early. If left untreated, Lyme disease can progress to arthritis and in some cases serious nervous system problems.



“Bullseye” rash of a patient infected with Lyme disease. Note that this rash does not always occur when someone is infected—it is important to look out for flu-like symptoms and check yourself for ticks.



Western black-legged ticks. Pictured from left to right: nymph, adult male, adult female. (Photo courtesy of CDPH).

**Santa Cruz County Mosquito & Vector Control can help with tick identification M-F, 8am-3pm.**

Contact information:

Phone: (831) 454-2590

Email: [Pesthelp@agdept.com](mailto:Pesthelp@agdept.com)

Website: [www.agdept.com](http://www.agdept.com) under “Mosquito abatement/Vector Control”

Office Located: 870 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz

Also visit: [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov) for more information on ticks and tick-borne diseases.

# Keep Ticks Off You



## Repel



- ◆ Use **bug repellents** with at least **20% DEET** on all exposed skin.
- ◆ Follow directions and reapply as needed.
- ◆ Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding hands, eyes, and mouth.

- ✓ Avoid logs and areas with high grass or fallen leaves
- ✓ Walk in the center of trails

- ◆ Wear long sleeves and pants when possible.
- ◆ Treat clothes and shoes with **permethrin** that kills ticks. This remains protective through several washings. Pre-treated clothing is available and may be protective longer.



## Remove

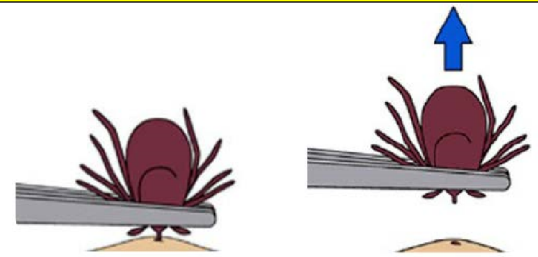
- ◆ If you find a tick crawling on you, brush it off.
- ◆ If you find a tick attached to your skin, remove it quickly.

- ◆ Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
- ◆ Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick.
- ◆ After removing the tick, clean the bite area and wash your hands with soap and water.

We can **identify your tick** and provide **information on disease risk**.

Keep it in a plastic bag (alive) and bring it to Santa Cruz County Mosquito & Vector Control  
640 Capitola Road, Santa Cruz 95062

Call ahead for availability: (831) 454-2590



## Shower



- ◆ Bathe and shower within two hours or as soon as possible after leaving an area with ticks to wash off ticks and to find them more easily.
- ◆ Do a full body check using a mirror to view all parts of your body. Ticks are usually found:
  - ✓ Under arms
  - ✓ In and around the ears
  - ✓ Inside the belly button
  - ✓ Behind the knees
  - ✓ Between the legs
  - ✓ On the scalp
- ◆ Parents should check their children for ticks.

- ✓ Tumble unwashed clothes in the dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill remaining ticks.
- ✓ Examine gear and pets. Ticks can hitchhike into homes.