

Health Unit Media Release

For Immediate Release: May 15, 2008



LYME DISEASE

As the warmer temperatures arrive, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit would like to remind you that while enjoying the outdoors you should take precautions to avoid being bitten by ticks and mosquitoes. **Lyme disease has been identified in this region and is now considered to be a risk here.** In 2007, 5% of the ticks submitted to the health unit for testing were positive for *Borrelia burgdorferi* the bacterium that causes Lyme disease.

You can proactively protect yourself from exposure to this disease by following some simple tips that you may already be familiar with in the prevention of West Nile Virus (WNV).

- Wear light coloured, long sleeved shirts and long pants tucked into your socks when walking in areas of long grass or vegetation.
- Insect repellents containing DEET help to repel ticks and mosquitoes.
- Around your home, keep your grass mowed, trim brush and remove leaf litter.
- Clean spilled bird feed around feeders to discourage rodent populations from becoming established, as they are hosts for ticks.
- Ticks thrive in humid wooded areas, so with a few landscaping changes you can make your property less attractive for ticks, and you are also reducing your risk for WNV.

When you return from the outdoors check your entire body thoroughly for ticks. If you find an attached tick, remove it promptly using a pair of tweezers. Treat the bite area with an antiseptic. Keep the tick in a small container. The health unit is continuing to accept ticks removed from **humans** for identification and testing for the bacteria.

Never ignore a bite from a tick, whether you are at home or traveling. Infected ticks may also be transported by small mammals or birds to areas where tick populations may not typically be expected. If you start to develop any of the following symptoms: a red bull's eye rash, fever, headache, muscle or joint pain, fatigue and a skin rash - **contact your doctor immediately** and let your doctor know when and where you were bitten by a tick. Initial symptoms usually occur within one to three weeks, but can range from 3 days to one month.

As ticks are carriers of the bacterium, your pets are also at risk of developing Lyme disease if bitten by an infected tick. **Consult your veterinarian** regarding prevention, treatment strategies and more information on how Lyme disease can affect your pet.

For further information on Lyme Disease and human health, please contact the Health Unit at 613-345-5685 or our Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853.

-30-

Contact: Joan Mays, Manager of Health Protection
(613) 345-5685 and 1-800-660-5853