

INSPECT AND PROTECT

Warmer weather is right around the corner, and it's never too early to think about protecting pets from ticks. Lyme disease is the most common vector-borne disease in Maine, and can be transmitted to both humans and animals. Maine had more than 1,395 human cases of Lyme disease reported in 2014 and the number will likely increase again this year.

Education about prevention and using caution outdoors is vital in preventing disease. May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month in Maine, and as veterinarians, you play an important role in educating pet owners. Please help us stress the importance of tick education and the "inspect and protect" prevention strategy. This includes daily tick checks of both people and their pets.

Lyme disease is caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted through the bite of an infected deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). The tick must be attached for 24 hours to transmit the bacteria, which is why it is vital to stress prompt, proper, and careful removal of attached ticks from both humans and pets.

Maine CDC would appreciate it if you would continue to remind pet owners that:

- Animals and humans are susceptible to Lyme disease.
- Daily tick checks are important for both animal and human health.
- Prompt and proper removal of attached ticks from both animals and humans will help prevent Lyme disease.
- Using acaricides on pets can help reduce the number of ticks that are brought into the home.
- There is a vaccine to prevent Lyme disease in dogs; however there is not a human vaccine.
- Lyme disease is treatable, in humans and animals, with antibiotics.

Deer ticks can transmit Lyme disease and two other tick-borne infections that are endemic in Maine: anaplasmosis and babesiosis. Cases of both these diseases are on the rise. Human cases of anaplasmosis doubled for the second year in a row in Maine, and human cases of babesiosis increased from 2013. The majority of tick-borne illnesses occur during the summer months when ticks, pets and humans are active outdoors.

Remember that the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) is the only tick that can transmit Lyme disease but there are other species of ticks throughout the state. Tick identification references are available to order online at Maine CDC's website. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension Tick ID lab offers free tick identification services and educational resources.

Thank you for your invaluable help in preventing Lyme disease here in Maine.

Resources

- Maine CDC has Lyme disease information available on our website at: <http://www.maine.gov/lyme>
- UMaine Extension Tick ID Lab: <http://umaine.edu/ipm/tickid/>
- Educational materials can also be ordered through our website at: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/order-form-wn.shtml>
- Human Lyme disease data is available through the Maine Tracking Network at: [Data Portal - Lyme](#)
- To continue getting Lyme updates throughout May please like our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MaineCDC>