

# Tick Season Has Arrived!

## Know Your Ticks And How To Protect Yourself

**Lee Wells**  
For Andover Conservation Commission

One of the great joys of warmer weather in New Hampshire is getting outside to enjoy that better weather and the natural beauty of our state. Some of the dampers on that enjoyment are the annoying small critters that we find, and that find us, when we are outside. If you and your family spend time outdoors, or have pets that spend time outdoors, then you need to be aware of ticks. The first line of defense against ticks is to be informed, and to use that information to know how to best coexist with these parasites that are, for better or worse, part of our environment.

The information in this article comes from the UNH Extension website on the Biology and Management of Ticks in New Hampshire, and I encourage you to check out the website to learn more. (<http://tinyurl.com/yy9xogrs>). The UNH website goes into great depth about the different species of ticks and the different diseases that they can carry. There is also much more information there about the variety of pesticides that can be used to combat them. It also has photos of ticks to help you with identification. The focus of this article is on the most common ticks found in New Hampshire and what we can do to reduce our risks.

### Ticks in New Hampshire

Most tick bites are harmless and don't require medical treatment. Ticks are blood sucking parasites that are members of the arachnid (spider) family and some of them do carry diseases.

The most common tick in New Hampshire is the American dog tick (aka wood tick), *Dermacentor variabilis*. It is about 1/8" long, brown and tan, and has a mottled pattern on its back. It is a "threehost" tick, because it must find and feed on an animal three times to complete its two-year life cycle. It must feed in its larva, nymph and adult phases. This species can transmit the organism that causes Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, which is rare in New

England. This tick is most active from May through July in our area. The bacterium that causes Lyme disease has been found in dog ticks, however tests prove that the tick cannot transmit the organism to its host. It is not involved in the spread of Lyme disease.

The second most common tick in New Hampshire is the blacklegged tick (aka deer tick), *Ixodes scapularis*. This is a smaller and more rounded tick than the dog tick. Adult males are very dark brown, almost black and the adult female is two toned: dark chestnut brown on the head and legs, and orange-red on the rear. This tick transmits the organism that causes Lyme disease. These ticks are most common in the southeastern part of the state. There are other species of ticks in the state, but most people never encounter them.

Most blacklegged ticks that carry the virus which causes Lyme Disease contract the bacteria from mice when they are in the larva and nymph phases. They then need weeks or months to grow into the adult phase, at which point they can transfer the disease to a host. Infected adult blacklegged ticks require more than 24 hours of feeding to transmit the bacteria to their host. The nymph can transmit the disease in 24 hours of feeding, or possibly less. The disease is spread by fluid from the tick being regurgitated back into the host. It is not the bite itself that causes disease, but the fluid transferred from the tick to the host. This process takes a relatively long time.

### Lyme Disease

Symptoms of Lyme disease in people begin with a red rash around the site of the bite. It usually appears three to 30 days after being bitten by an infected tick, and it expands in size and then fades. It shouldn't be confused with the red spot that appears within hours where you've removed a tick. The rash is often ring shaped and can be warm to the touch. Fatigue, fever, headaches, stiffness and pain in muscles and joints often occur. They can appear from a few days to weeks after infection.

Most cases are transmitted by ticks

in the nymph phase because they are smaller and more easily overlooked. Treatment with antibiotics is most successful in the early stages.

Experts recommend that ticks be removed with tweezers, grasping the tick as close to the head as possible. The tick should be pulled away gently and not yanked or pulled sideways. Pulling it sideways or yanking it could cause the head to break off and stay in the wound.

People often ask to have ticks tested for the presence of disease. The UNH Cooperative Extension doesn't have the ability to do this, but they can provide information on labs that do such tests. However, these tests can be expensive (\$75) and it can take several days to get results, and it is generally recommended to not wait for results before starting treatment. If you have been bitten or are concerned about illness after a bite, consult your physician.

### To protect yourself from tick bites:

- Stay away from tall grass and brushy areas that are prime tick habitats.
- If you do spend time in tick infested areas, wear proper clothing – good shoes and long pants tucked into your socks, and a long sleeved shirt with a snug collar and cuffs offer protection. Be sure to tuck in the shirt. Light colored clothing allows you to readily spot crawling ticks. You can purchase tick-proof or tick resistant clothing. Wearing tall rubber boots can reduce the number of ticks that can get onto you.

• Clothes can be sprayed with Permethrin, which is long lasting (often through numerous washings) but should be sprayed on clothing and allowed to dry. It should never be used on skin.

• The most effective repellents contain "Deet". It should be used sparingly on skin. Socks, ankles, legs and pant legs are the best places to spray.

• If you have been in tick infested woods or fields, monitor yourself, your children and pets every day during tick season.

• If you do get a tick bite, your chances of getting Lyme disease are very small, but to be safe you should monitor your health closely and be alert for any signs of tick borne illness. If you do experience symptoms, consult your physician.

• The greatest natural mortality factor for ticks is drying out. To reduce the threat of ticks on your property take steps to make vegetation and leaf litter dry out faster. Keep your lawn mowed, and reduce contact with tall grass. Widen paths through the woods and move play equipment away from tall grass and from the edge of the woods.

Don't let ticks ruin your outdoor experience or keep you from spending time outdoors. They are easy to spot and remove, but require vigilance. Be tick smart, use precautions, check for ticks after being in the woods or in tall grass, and enjoy the great outdoors. 



**VILLAGE SPORTS**

**ESTD. 1979**

**OUTDOOR FUN**

Enjoy New Hampshire's pristine waters and scenic countryside with high quality gear from a local shop providing outdoor fun since 1979.

- Kayak, Paddleboard and Pedego Electric Bike Sales & Rentals
- We also carry Thule, Garmin Fitness Trackers, Osprey Day Packs, Leki Trekking Poles, Goodr Sunglasses and Bike Accessories
- Bike Repair and Tune-Ups by Appointment

**Early Season Hours (5/18 – 6/17):**  
**Open Thursdays thru Mondays 9:30am – 5pm**  
**After June 17th: Open daily 9:30am – 5pm**

394 Main Street, New London, NH 03257  
villagesportsnh.com | (603) 526-4948

## SEUFERT LAW OFFICES, PA

- Personal Injury
- Civil Litigation
- Family Law
- Workers Compensation
- Divorce

- Bankruptcy
- DWI/ALS
- Commercial Litigation
- Lead Paint Poisoning
- Criminal Defense

**Christopher J. Seufert**  
**Catherine L. Baumann**

www.seufertlaw.com

59 Central Street, Franklin, 934-9837 • Concord, 224-8672

**WE'LL GET YOU THROUGH IT®**