

Ashtabula County Health Department
12 West Jefferson Street
Jefferson, Ohio 44047
Phone: 440-576-6010

DATE: September 8, 2011
FROM: Raymond J. Saporito
Ashtabula County Health Department
RE: Black Legged Deer Ticks in Ashtabula County

Press Release

The Ashtabula County Health Department wishes to remind Ashtabula County residents to be acutely aware that black legged deer ticks are present in Ashtabula County; and that black legged deer ticks can transmit Lyme Disease to humans.

In 2010, Ohio reported 40 black legged ticks. Of the 40 black legged deer ticks, 13 were found in Ashtabula County.

Historically, black legged deer ticks have rarely been found in Ohio. It is not entirely clear why Ashtabula County and Ohio have experienced an influx of black legged deer ticks in 2011. However, Ashtabula County's close proximity to the State of Pennsylvania may be a major factor in finding deer ticks in Ashtabula County. Pennsylvania has historically had a large population of black legged deer ticks within its borders as well as a large number of Lyme Disease cases.

Black legged deer ticks have been found to carry a bacterium which can cause Lyme Disease. Black legged deer ticks can transmit Lyme disease to people when black legged deer ticks bite humans.

Black legged deer ticks actively look to bite and feed off the blood supply of a host such as people, pets, or deer throughout most of the year, including fall and on some warm winter days.

Lyme Disease can cause a number of symptoms that may include fatigue, chills, fever, headache, muscle and joint aches, and swollen lymph nodes. The first sign of a Lyme Disease infection may involve a circular rash that begins at the site of a tick bite. Although this rash does not appear in all people infected with Lyme Disease, the rash may appear from three to thirty days after a tick bite.

Lyme Disease can be effectively treated with antibiotics if treatment is begun early in the course of illness. If Lyme Disease is left untreated, some people will experience intermittent bouts of severe joint pain and swelling.

Everyone, especially hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts need to be aware of black legged deer ticks and take precautions to prevent ticks from attaching to body parts. Outer clothing should be sprayed with a permethrin-based repellent according to label directions the day before hunting and allowed to air dry. Pants should be tucked into socks and shirt into pants to keep ticks on the outside of clothing. These ticks will be difficult to spot on camouflage clothing. All clothing should be carefully inspected for small dark crawling ticks before entering vehicles and going indoors. Once inside, the outdoorsman should thoroughly check for small attached ticks. Remove attached ticks as soon as they are discovered to reduce the risk of contracting Lyme Disease. If you find ticks on yourself, your hunting dog, or your deer, pull them off using the thumb and forefinger while wearing protective latex or rubber gloves, or use tweezers. Ticks should be saved in a hard container, such as a pill box or film container, so specimens are not crushed. Include a very lightly moistened piece of paper towel in the container to keep the tick alive for identification.

Note the date and location of where the tick was most likely obtained, save it in the refrigerator. Residents should contact their local health department to have the tick sent to the Ohio Department of Health for identification.

For all residents who wish to have ticks identified and reside outside of Ashtabula and Conneaut City, contact the Ashtabula County Health Department at 576-6010 to have ticks sent to the Ohio Department of Health for identification. Residents who wish to have ticks identified and reside in Ashtabula City should contact the Ashtabula City Health Department at 992-7123 to have ticks sent to the Ohio Department of Health for identification. Residents who wish to have ticks identified and reside in Conneaut City should contact the Conneaut City Health Department at 593-3087 to have ticks sent to the Ohio Department of Health for identification.