

Tick bulletin for August

Author: Lois

Ticks so small...*they crawl right through your socks!*

TickSmart tips for managing Larval Ticks

All ticks come in small, medium, and large sizes. The large ones are the adults, medium-sized ticks are called nymphs, and the smallest life-stage are the **LARVAE**. August is the time that larval blacklegged (deer) ticks and Lone Star ticks make their appearance...**if you can see them!** Larvae are the size of a speck of salt but you'll know they are larvae if you only count 6 legs (nymph and adult ticks have 8).

One of the biggest problems with larval ticks is that you rarely encounter just one. Stories from people that describe walking through a "tick nest" usually end up being about larval ticks. Larval ticks hatch from tick egg masses that can contain 2,000-3,000 eggs. Some people end up finding hundreds of tiny ticks biting them from a single encounter. We've found a few hundred "little balls of blood" attached and feeding on the toes of dogs, too. Another problem is that the hungry host-seeking larvae can fairly easily crawl right through socks.

The **good news** on larval ticks is that they rarely are carrying any germs. Both blacklegged ticks and Lone Star ticks hatch from eggs germ-free...**MOSTLY**. Larval blacklegged ticks may rarely be infected with a non-Lyme disease bacterial germ (*Borrelia miyamotoi*) that causes a relapsing fever disease. Fewer than 1 in 100 larvae are carriers of this germ and it is not known if an infected larva is even capable of transmitting an infectious dose to a person. Overall, disease risk from larval ticks is considered to be low.

But infected or not, no one wants any kind of tick to bite them. Bizarrely, people bitten previously by Lone Star larvae report that these tiny ticks create really red, itchy bites that can drive you crazy. Some people think they've been bitten by chiggers, but in our region, it's more likely to be larval Lone Stars. More rarely, people who are bitten by larval Lone Stars can develop a curious allergy to eating red meat.

Here's what you can do to prevent larval tick bites:

- Spray repellents containing permethrin on shoes and socks.
- Wear socks commercially-treated with permethrin.
- Carry a roll of sticky duct tape to help remove larvae in case you step, sit in, or

touch a “tick nest.” *This works best to contain the larval ticks before they bite.*

Don't forget to send pictures of any ticks found biting to [TickSpotters](#) National Grid to confirm the identification and to learn best next actions to take.

Date: 29-07-2016

:field_56f15f5d05e83

Author: Samantha Murray