**This news release from K-State Research and Extension is posted online at www.ksre.k-state.edu/news/stories/2022/06/health-ticks-in-kansas.html**

Released: June 14, 2022

**Tick Check: Wet spring creates ideal conditions for pesky parasite**

K-State expert advises taking tick bites seriously

*By Lisa Moser, K-State Research and Extension news service*

MANHATTAN, Kan. — All nature-loving Kansans have likely had one common lifetime experience — crossing paths with ticks. Many may wonder what to do when one is found on the body and how to reduce the likelihood of attracting them in the first place.

Kansas State University extension horticultural entomologist Raymond Cloyd said a tick’s primary role in the ecosystems is as a food source for vertebrates and other organisms.

“Ticks are a part of nature’s balance in our ecosystem and are commonly found in vegetative growth,” Cloyd said. “Because of all the rain that we’ve had, the environmental conditions have created conducive habitats for many ticks.”

He said ticks thrive in moist, humid conditions and can be found from spring through fall.

“If we start having dry, hot weather, that will likely decrease the tick population,” Cloyd said.

So how do they impact humans?

“Ticks reside in grassy areas near the soil and then they latch on to a host when they go by. The females need a blood meal in order to produce eggs,” Cloyd said.

To avoid picking up ticks, Cloyd offers the following tips:

- When in nature, avoid unmanaged areas, instead opting to stay on the paths.
- Apply repellants that contain 30% DEET.
- Tuck your jeans inside white socks when going on hikes so ticks are easy to spot.
Once arriving home, Cloyd advised removing clothes immediately and doing tick checks. He also encouraged people to put their clothes in the dryer at the highest setting to kill the ticks.

“Seed ticks are hard to spot because they are early in the larval stage of life, which is why we recommend taking a shower and doing a close check of your body when you come in from the outdoors,” Cloyd said.

If one finds a tick on their body that hasn’t latched on, Cloyd said to kill it by firmly squishing the tick to keep it from spreading to someone else in the house.

“It is important to identify the type of tick it is, but if it hasn’t latched on to the body, you should be okay,” Cloyd said. He added that most ticks will be found on the body below the shoulder.

However, if the tick has attached to the body, Cloyd said it is important to carefully remove the tick and then put it in a sealed bag so it can be identified, and go to the doctor’s office for evaluation.

Cloyd’s advised using tweezers to remove the tick.

“Put the tweezers as close as you can to the skin where the head of the tick is and then gently lift up as you move the tweezers back and forth,” Cloyd said. “Take the tick and go straight to the doctor’s office because they can prescribe treatments and intervene before the infection spreads in the body.”

He stressed the importance of identifying the tick type because specific varieties of ticks carry different diseases.

“Most of the ticks we have in Kansas are associated with some type of disease. You’ve got to take ticks seriously, especially if they become embedded in the skin,” Cloyd said.

For those who need help identifying ticks, Cloyd encouraged them to check out the extension bulletin, Ticks in Kansas. For additional questions, he suggests reaching out to K-State’s Department of Entomology by contacting an extension diagnostician at gotbugs@ksu.edu.

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Story by:
Lisa Moser
785-532-2010
lmoser@ksu.edu
More information:
Raymond Cloyd
785-532-4750
rcloyd@ksu.edu