



Lyme Disease Fact Sheet

What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection transmitted by deer ticks (*blacklegged tick*). It can be identified by a characteristic “bull’s eye” rash and causes symptoms including fever, fatigue, muscle aches, and headaches (see Figure 2). The infection can also lead to meningitis, arthritis and cardiac abnormalities. Lyme disease is treatable with commonly used antibiotics.

Deer ticks are normally carried on deer or deer mice, but they can also be carried on domestic animals like dogs, cats and horses. Ticks drop off animals, attach to grass or shrubs, and then transfer to animals or people brushing past.

There are many kinds of ticks found in Nova Scotia. The most common is the dog tick which does not carry lyme disease. Figure 1 on the following page shows the difference between the deer (*blacklegged tick*), and the dog tick, both of which can be found in Nova Scotia.

How can Lyme disease be prevented?

Lyme disease can be prevented by avoiding tick bites. You can do this by

- keeping the grass around your home cut
- using insect repellent containing DEET according to manufacturer’s instructions
- wearing light coloured clothing so you can see ticks more easily
- when walking, working or playing in areas where deer ticks are found, covering as much of your skin as possible by tucking your shirt into your pants, and tucking your pant legs into your socks
- checking yourself, your children and your pets often for ticks

Will I get Lyme disease if I get a bite from an infected tick?

An infected tick can only transmit Lyme disease once it has engorged itself with blood, which takes about 24 hours. Since tick bites are usually painless, you might not even know if you’ve been bitten. By checking your body often for ticks, you can find and remove them before they do any damage.

How do I remove ticks from myself or my pets?

To remove ticks, carefully grasp them with tweezers as close to the skin as possible, and slowly pull the tick straight out – do not jerk, twist or squeeze it.

What should I do if I find a deer tick?

Lyme disease is fairly new to Nova Scotia. The Department of Natural Resources and the Museum of Natural History are collecting deer ticks for research and identification to learn more.

The deer tick (*blacklegged*) is smaller than the wood tick and does not have any white markings on the large part of its body. Ticks matching this description can either be dropped off or mailed to your nearest DNR office or the Museum of Natural History.

Place the tick in a clean, sturdy pill bottle or film canister, firmly tape the lid shut and include in the package your name, telephone number and details on when and where in the province the tick was found.

For more information on Lyme disease, visit the Department of Health website at www.gov.ns.ca/health or call your local Public Health office.

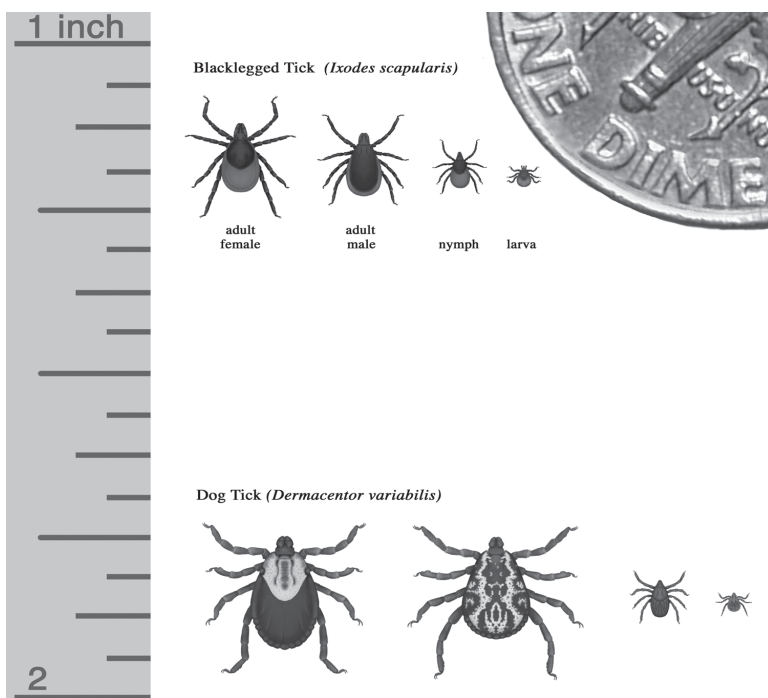


Figure 1: The blacklegged "deer" ticks found in Nova Scotia can carry lyme disease. (Illustration from Centre for Disease Control).



Figure 2: Bull's Eye rash