



NEWS RELEASE

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

Michael S. Long
Director of Environmental Services
Tel [203] 622-7835

or

Mary Racho, Director
Laboratory Services
Tel. [203] 622-7843

October 26, 2022
For Immediate Release

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH URGES RESIDENTS TO BEWARE OF TICKS THAT MAY CARRY LYME DISEASE AND OTHER TICKBORNE DISEASES

[Greenwich, CT] - Lyme disease has been a public health issue in Connecticut since 1975. In fact, infected ticks transmit disease 12 months of the year in every U.S. State. While most human cases of Lyme are the disease result of the bites of tiny, infected immature ticks called “nymphs”, which feed during the spring and early summer months, the adult blacklegged tick known as a “deer tick” or *Ixodes scapularis*, is most active from late October through May. Therefore, it’s time to think about protecting yourself from tick bites.

In 2019, the latest year for which national information is available, thirty-four thousand and nine hundred forty-five (34,945) confirmed Lyme disease cases were reported in the U.S. Along with many other tick-associated diseases such as anaplasmosis and babesiosis, Lyme disease can be readily acquired in any Connecticut town, particularly in areas that are wooded. Among the states with the most reports, Connecticut ranked ninth. In 2020, Connecticut reported a total of six hundred nineteen (619) confirmed and probable cases of Lyme disease. Among the eight Connecticut counties, Fairfield had the second highest number of confirmed and probable cases of Lyme reported. In FY 2021/2022, the Greenwich Department of Health Laboratory tested 513 ticks and about 13% of them were positive for the Lyme disease bacterium. About 1% were positive for organism that causes Babesiosis. Overall, examining infection rates by the life stage of the tick in this year, 15% of the adult ticks and 9% of the nymph ticks (active May-July) were positive for the Lyme bacterium.

“The fall is an important time to be aware of Lyme disease, since everyone is planting, raking leaves and/or taking part in some kind of outdoor activity”, stated Caroline Calderone Baisley, Director of Health. “By applying a few simple precautionary measures like checking for ticks on the body every day, avoiding tick-

prone areas such as leaf litter and vegetation, and using insect repellent according to the manufacturer's direction the outdoors can be fully enjoyed. These measures will decrease the chance of being bit by an infected tick. It is also important to remember that pets can carry ticks into the home, so checking pets for ticks will greatly reduce the risk of ticks being carried indoors. Pet owners should talk to their veterinarians about using a topical tick prevention product on their pet all year long”.

Other tickborne diseases such as Babesiosis are also important to take note of. The State of Connecticut reported 247 confirmed and probable cases of Babesiosis in 2018. This disease is increasing across the U.S. along with other tickborne diseases.

In an effort to raise awareness of this important health problem, the Greenwich Department of Health Laboratory will continue to provide public health literature and offer tick testing for the bacterium that causes Lyme disease and the protozoan organism that causes Babesiosis. “Although a tick may test positive, it does not necessarily mean that you will get Lyme disease,” stated Lab Director Mary Racho. “Like any other screening tool, the process for testing ticks has a small margin of error and, specifically for these diseases, the tick must be attached for a period of time in order to increase a person’s risk of getting the disease. An engorged positive tick is much more likely to pass on the pathogen agent than those ticks that are not engorged. Tick testing is the only one tool among many to assess a person’s risk of getting Lyme disease or other tickborne diseases.”

If a tick is found on a person, it should be removed carefully with a long nose tweezer. The tick should be placed in a tightly sealed small plastic sandwich bag marked with the date and body site of the bite. The cost of tick testing is \$68.00, which includes identifying the bacterium that causes Lyme disease and the protozoan organism that causes Babesiosis. Results are normally available within 7-10 days. For additional information on Lyme disease and other tickborne diseases, visit the Department of Health’s webpage at www.greenwichct.gov and click “Brochures & Print Material” for the Ticks and Lyme disease link or visit the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health website at www.ct.gov/dph/ticks. The Greenwich Department of Health Lab can be reached at 203-622-7843 for more information

