Treeways

2015 – 6

Lyme Disease

Lyme Disease is a bacterial disease, caused by Borrelia burgdorferi, was first described in Connecticut in 1977 and is now the most commonly reported vector-borne disease in the United States. There may be as many as 12,000 to 15,000 Minnesotans infected each year and many are not correctly diagnosed. The blacklegged tick (deer tick), Ixodes scapularis, is the vector that transmits Lyme disease to humans and is found throughout Minnesota especially in wooded to partially wooded regions. **A number of our neighbors and their pets have contracted Lyme disease within the city limits of Sunfish Lake.**

Prevent contact with ticks by walking near the center of trails and avoiding grassy areas. Wear light colored protective clothing and tuck in your pants into your socks. Light colored clothing makes it easier to spot ticks moving. Use the repellent DEET (N, N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) on skin or clothes. The insecticide permethrin is also an effective repellent but should only be applied to clothing and has the advantage of lasting through several washings.

The blacklegged tick adult is tiny, only about $1/10^{th}$ of an inch long, and the nymph stage is even smaller (about the size of a poppy seed). Ticks typically wait on vegetation near lawn edges, near woodland pathways, or in woodlands to grab onto a potential host as the person walks by. Risk of tick bites is highest during spring, summer and fall and tick-borne diseases peak during June through August.

The ticks pass on the disease by biting the host so checking for ticks is a priority. A tick must be attached for at least 24 hours before it can transit Lyme disease. Check with your doctor if you have been bitten and remove the tick immediately by grabbing its head with a pointed tweezers and slowly pull it out. Save the tick in a Ziploc bag for identification. Lyme disease is very treatable early on during an infection. For excellent information check the Minnesota Lyme Association website at: www.mnlyme.org.

The infection frequency of two other diseases (Anaplasmosis and Babesiosis) is increasing and the blacklegged tick also transmits them. Anaplasmosis is caused by bacteria that infect white blood cells and Babesiosis is a protozoan that infects red blood cells and they both are more likely to occur in people with compromised immune systems. An individual can be co-infected with Lyme disease, Anaplasmosis and Babesiosis. Prevention is the same as for Lyme disease though these diseases may be transmitted in less than 24 hours after tick attachment.