

Ticks are a serious pest in most parts of the world. Tick bites, in addition to causing irritation and infection, have been implicated in the transmission of diseases such as Colorado Tick Fever, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Relapsing Fever, Tularemia and Lyme Disease. Ticks are not insects but arachnids, as are spiders, scorpions and mites.

There are two main groups of ticks, hard ticks and soft ticks. In Colorado, hard ticks are much more abundant than soft ticks, cause greater annoyance, and are far more important in the transmission of disease.

Hard Ticks

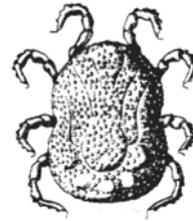
The Rocky Mountain Wood Tick is a hard tick about 1/8" long, which may grow to nearly 1/2" long when engorged with blood. The female is dark reddish-brown with a white shield covering the front third of the body. The male has a grayish-white shield area on top of the body. This tick lives in the mountainous areas of Colorado and is especially abundant on the south facing, brushy slopes of the foothills of Jefferson County. Wood ticks are known to transmit Colorado Tick Fever, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Tularemia.

Soft Ticks

Soft ticks are light gray and leathery in appearance. The average person seldom sees it, as it is a "nest tick" meaning it lives in the nests of the animals it normally feeds on. It can live for months or even years without feeding. This nighttime feeding tick occasionally bites humans sleeping in old cabins. Soft ticks are known to transmit Relapsing Fever.



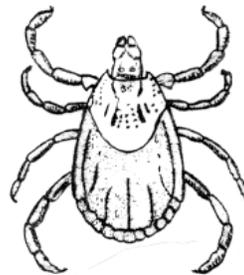
Hard Tick



Soft Tick

Tick-borne Diseases

Colorado Tick Fever is a viral disease whose symptoms include fever, head and body aches. Other symptoms may include lethargy, nausea, abdominal pain and occasionally, a skin rash. The illness usually begins within six days after the bite of an infected tick and lasts four to five days followed by apparent recovery. Fever and other symptoms reoccur for another two or three weeks. This disease is rarely life threatening, and once recovered, people are rarely re-infected. There is currently no effective treatment or vaccine for tick fever.



Rocky Mountain Wood Tick

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is a bacterial disease characterized by the sudden onset of chills, fever, headache and bloodshot eyes. Anywhere from the second to the fifth day after the onset of these first symptoms, a rash appears on

the wrists and ankles which later spreads to the rest of the body. Symptoms appear two to fourteen days after infection. This disease is far more serious than Colorado Tick Fever, but is treatable with antibiotics. It is important for people who become ill and develop a rash after a tick bite to seek medical treatment immediately. Although common in some parts of the nation, and despite the name, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is rare in Colorado.

Tularemia, sometimes called "rabbit fever", is a plague-like bacterial disease of rabbits and rodents, which people can catch through the bite of an infected tick. Symptoms include chills, fever, prostration, an ulcer at the site of infection, and tender, swollen lymph glands. Tularemia is treatable with antibiotics

Relapsing Fever is a bacterial disease spread by a soft tick. Symptoms begin three to ten days after the bite of an infected tick and consist of periods of fever lasting two to nine days followed by similar periods without fever. The number of relapses varies from two to ten or more. The soft tick feeds for only a brief period and usually at night, so victims are often unaware of recent tick bites. Relapsing fever is treatable with antibiotics.

Lyme Disease, so named because it was first identified in the town of Lyme, Connecticut in 1975, is a bacterial disease transmitted by a tiny tick often no bigger than a poppy seed (pictured on the front of this brochure). Symptoms begin three to thirty-two days after the tick bite, beginning with a distinctive "bull's-eye" shaped expanding red rash. This may be

accompanied by a flu-like illness with fever, headache, extreme fatigue, and stiff neck. When treated with antibiotics immediately, most patients recover fully. If not treated promptly, the disease may progress and cause swelling and pain in the joints (especially the knees) that may lead to arthritis. Other symptoms may include heart arrhythmia, facial palsy and loss of sensation. These symptoms fluctuate, can last for months and may become chronic.



Lyme Disease “Bulls Eye” Rash

Fortunately, Lyme Disease is extremely rare in Colorado. Many of the tiny ticks that carry this disease are not native to this state and those that are rarely bite humans.

Tick Prevention and Removal

The simplest way to prevent tick bites and tick-borne diseases is through the use of “tick checks”. Persons outdoors in the mountain environment should periodically check for and remove ticks from their clothing and bodies. These checks should be done every two to three hours as ticks often crawl about on their victims for hours

before feeding. Have a companion or parent help examine the back and scalp. Routine checks could prevent an estimated 75% of all tick-borne diseases.

Additional protection methods include tucking trousers into the tops of socks and shirttails into trousers; wearing light-colored clothing to make ticks easier to spot; treating clothing with insect repellants containing DEET to reduce the number of ticks climbing onto clothing.



Tick Removal

If ticks should become attached the simplest way to remove them is by a slow, steady pull. Grasp the tick and gently but firmly with tweezers and pull backwards. Be careful not to crush the tick or leave the mouthparts in the flesh. Wash hands thoroughly afterwards and apply an antiseptic to the bite. Using heat or substances such as oil or fingernail polish to remove ticks is not recommended. Persons who become ill after a tick bite should consult a physician.

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Ticks



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