Press Release

**DHHS Issues Reminder about Disease Prevention Efforts for Tick Season in New Hampshire**

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Communicable Disease Control and Surveillances

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Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) is reminding residents that tick season is upon us once again and that people should take precautions to prevent being bitten by ticks and being potentially exposed to Lyme disease or other tick-borne illnesses. In 2013, 1,689 cases of Lyme disease were identified in the State of New Hampshire, with the highest rates of disease in Hillsborough, Rockingham, and Strafford Counties. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there were over 30,000 cases in the United States in 2012 (the most recent year for which data are available), and New Hampshire had the highest incidence rate of Lyme disease in the county.

Lyme disease is caused by the bacterium Borrelia burgdoferi and is transmitted to people by the bite of an infected black-legged tick (also known as the deer tick). The greatest risk for Lyme disease is between the months of May and August when the black-legged tick is in the juvenile stage; it’s the size of a poppy seed and very difficult to see, so individuals may be unaware they have been bitten. Ticks that transmit Lyme can also transmit other diseases, such as anaplasmosis, babesiosis, and Powassan virus. Although not as common as Lyme, these diseases can also cause illness.

"Unfortunately Lyme disease remains common in New Hampshire," said DPHS Director of Public Health Dr. José Montero. "We cannot afford to let our guard down since we also know that a high proportion of ticks in New Hampshire are infected with the Lyme spirochete. We would like everyone to consistently take the necessary precautions to protect themselves and their families from becoming ill from this and other tick-borne diseases."

Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, headache, fatigue, and often a skin rash that is round and looks like a bulls-eye. Lyme disease is treatable with antibiotics, but if left untreated can lead to severe headaches and neck pain caused by meningitis (inflammation of the spinal cord), pain and swelling in the large joints, shooting pains that may interfere with sleep, and heart palpitations and dizziness.

DHHS recommends taking the following precautions to prevent tick bites:

* Avoid tick-infested areas such as overgrown grass, brush, and leaf litter
* Use insect repellent labeled as effective against ticks
* Wear protective clothing (long pants and long sleeves to keep ticks off skin)
* Do daily tick checks on yourself and family members, especially after being outdoors
* Reduce ticks around your home by keeping grass short and removing leaf litter
* Speak with your healthcare provider if you are bitten by a tick or if you notice a large round rash anywhere on you.

For more information about Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases, visit the DHHS website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/lyme/index.htm](http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dphs/cdcs/lyme/index.htm) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at [www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html).



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