WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT TICK BORNE DISEASES?

Blacklegged ticks, also known as deer ticks, live in shady, moist areas at ground level. They will cling to tall grass, brush and shrubs, usually no more than 18-24 inches off the ground. They also live in lawns and gardens, especially at the edges of woods and around old stone walls. Deer ticks cannot jump or fly, and do not drop onto passing people or animals. They get on humans and animals only by direct contact. Once a tick gets on the skin, it generally climbs upward until it reaches a protected area.

In tick-infested areas, the best protection is to avoid contact with soil, leaf litter and vegetation. However, if you garden, hike, camp, hunt, work, or otherwise spend time in the outdoors, you can still protect yourself and your pets...

• Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks easily.
• Regularly check for ticks on yourself when outside.
• Wear enclosed shoes, long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants.
• Consult your veterinarian about treating your dog or cat with tick-killing pesticides (acaricides), and using tick collars.
• There is currently a Lyme disease vaccine available for dogs. However, there are varying opinions on its effectiveness. Consult your veterinarian about the vaccine.

From: www.health.ny.gov/publications/2825/

• The CDC recommends use of repellants and repellant-impregnated clothing. (https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_people.html)

How to Remove a Tick:

Don’t panic. Not all ticks are infected, and your risk of acquiring Lyme disease is greatly reduced if the tick is removed within the first 36 hours after attachment.

REMOVE THE TICK PROMPTLY AND PROPERLY:

• Using fine pointed tweezers, grasp the tick as close to skin as possible.
• Gently pull the tick in a steady, upward motion.
• Wash the area with a disinfectant.
• Monitor the bite site for 30 days for expanding red rash, and consult your physician if you feel unwell following a tick bite.

When trying to remove the tick:

• DO NOT touch the tick with your bare hands.
• DO NOT squeeze the body of the tick as this may increase your risk of infection.
• DO NOT put alcohol, nail polish remover or vaseline on the tick. This may increase your risk of infection.
• DO NOT put a hot match or cigarette on the tick in an effort to make it “back out”. This may increase your risk of infection.
During the fall of 2017, surveillance for blacklegged ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*) was conducted at 39 sites in six North Country counties (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Herkimer and St. Lawrence). Blacklegged tick population density was highest at the lowest elevations, but ticks were also found at higher elevations sites (exceeding 1600 feet). Tick densities are still patchy, but there is risk of encounter throughout the North Country.

In the fall of 2017, a total of 498 ticks were collected from 16 of the 39 sites surveyed, and were tested for presence of pathogens. *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the causative agent of Lyme disease, was found in blacklegged tick populations throughout the North Country. The average infection rate for *Borrelia burgdorferi* was 47.5%. Infection rates among the sites varied from 0-85%. Risk of Lyme disease exposure is likely present, even in very low density tick areas.

*Babesia microti*, the malaria-like parasite which causes babesiosis in humans, was found at two sites in the North Country in 2016, both near the Clinton/Essex county border. In 2017, a significant geographic range spread was observed, with *B. microti* detected at five sites located in Clinton, Essex, Franklin and St. Lawrence counties.

Whereas incidence of Lyme disease throughout New York State has remained fairly steady over the past two decades, incidences have risen sharply in the North Country. From 2010-2016, the incidence of