

TICKS & LYME DISEASE -- FACTS & FAQ

- **What ticks carry Lyme Disease?** Only the western blacklegged tick is a carrier of Lyme disease in California. 2-15% of nymphal blacklegged ticks carry Lyme Disease, while adults have a 1-2% infection rate. [\[ref\]](#)
- **How prevalent is Lyme Disease in California and the Bay Area?** There are about 80 to 100 reported cases of Lyme Disease a year. [\[ref\]](#) Contra Costa county is of relatively low risk for Lyme disease (0.1-0.9 cases per 100,000 person per year) [\[ref\]](#) Blacklegged ticks are most common in the moister regions of the coastal ranges and can only survive short periods where humidity is less than 90% [\[ref\]](#). Exposure to nymphal ticks is highest in moist, dense woodland with lots of shade. [\[ref\]](#) Due to drier climate, most ticks at the Reservoir are the pacific coast tick. [\[ref\]](#)
- **How can I identify ticks?** See images below of the most common ticks in the Bay Area. We send ticks to Contra Costa Vector control to have a professional identify them. Ticks can also be identified by life stage: larvae, nymphs, and adult. Larvae are the size of a grain of sand, nymphs are the size of a sesame seed, and adult ticks the size of an apple seed. After attaching and feeding, they can increase to the size of a grape. [\[ref\]](#)
- **What season are ticks most active?** June is the highest month for infections, and drops in half by July, but infections continue throughout the year [\[ref\]](#)
- **How do ticks feed on humans?** Ticks position themselves on wild grasses and low plants at or below knee level and attached to animals and people who brush against them. [\[ref\]](#) Ticks do not fall from trees, jump, or fly. Once attached, the tick will secrete a cement-like substance that helps it stay in place to feed. A feeding tick can remain attached for many hours or days as it feeds, after which it will drop off the host. [\[ref\]](#)
- **How long do ticks need to be attached to transmit Lyme disease?** Ticks require a minimum of 24 hours of attachment to transmit the bacteria that causes Lyme disease. [\[ref\]](#)
- **What are the symptoms of Lyme Disease?** Early signs and symptoms include fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint pain, and swollen lymph nodes -- all common flu symptoms [\[ref\]](#). Symptoms occur 3 to 30 days after a bite [\[ref\]](#). 7-10 days after a tick bite, a rash often (but not in all cases) develops and may display the trademark red and white bullseye. [\[ref\]](#)
- **If a tick does transmit Lyme Disease, what can be done?** If treated with appropriate antibiotics in the early, acute stages of Lyme disease (1-2 weeks), recovery is usually rapid and complete. [\[ref\]](#)

What should I do if I find a tick on my camper?

1. If it is not attached and is not engorged due to feeding (see “partially fed” images below), it can be safely disposed.
2. Use tweezers, placed at base of tick’s mouth, to pull the tick out from the skin. Do not burn the tick!
3. Put it in a zip lock bag along with a moist paper towel to keep it alive.
4. Label the zip lock bag with your camper’s name, and date/time/location you found tick.
5. Call/email our office that you have found a tick and send it with you camper the next day. We will send it to Contra Costa Vector Control to determine if it is a Western Blacklegged tick, the only tick that is a carrier of Lyme disease.
6. If a tick is identified as a Western Blacklegged tick, further testing is needed to determine if it carries and has transmitted the bacteria that causes Lyme Disease.

IMAGES OF BAY AREA TICKS



Western black-legged tick
Ixodes pacificus



Pacific Coast Tick
Dermacentor occidentalis



American Dog Tick
Dermacentor variabilis

Images from www.sgvmosquito.org

Species

Larva

Nymph

Male

Female

Partially Fed
Female

Fully Fed
Female

Click on a tick row to view larger images and more information about tick species.

Dog Tick <i>Dermacentor variabilis</i>						
Western-Blacklegged Tick <i>Ixodes pacificus</i>						No Image Available
Pacific Coast Tick <i>Dermacentor occidentalis</i>	No Image Available	No Image Available			No Image Available	No Image Available

Tick Encounter Resource Center ©



← Western-blacklegged tick, actual size.