

News column for use week of July 5, 2022
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Lookout for Ticks

It is one of those years. Ticks are everywhere. We have had calls ranging from pets to cattle concerning these little parasites. No one likes to run into a tick. So, how can we reduce the likelihood of attracting them and what do we do when we find one on ourselves?

A tick's primary role in the ecosystems is as a food source for vertebrates and other organisms. Ticks are a part of nature and are commonly found in vegetative growth. Because of the consistent rain that we've had, the environmental conditions have created conducive habitats for ticks.

They thrive in moist, humid conditions and can be found from spring through fall. Dry, hot weather, usually decreases tick populations.

Ticks reside in grassy areas near the soil and latch on to a host when they go by. The females need a blood meal to produce eggs.

To avoid picking up ticks, Kansas State University extension entomologist Raymond Cloyd offers the following tips:

- When in nature, avoid unmanaged areas, instead opting to stay on the paths.
- Apply repellants that contain 30% DEET.
- Tuck your jeans inside white socks when going on hikes so ticks are easy to spot.

Once arriving home, Cloyd advised removing clothes immediately and doing tick checks. Most ticks will be found on the body below the shoulder.

Seed ticks are hard to spot because they are early in the larval stage of life, which is why it's recommended to take a shower and do a close check of your body when you come in from the outdoors.

If you find a tick on your body that has not latched on, kill it by firmly squishing the tick to keep it from spreading to someone else in the house.

"It is important to identify the type of tick it is, but if it hasn't latched on to the body, you should be okay," Cloyd suggests.

If the tick is attached, it is important to carefully remove the tick and then put it in a sealed bag so it can be identified.

Use tweezers to remove the tick.

Put the tweezers as close as you can to the skin where the head of the tick is and then gently lift up as you move the tweezers back and forth.

If you have been bitten, you should consider going to the doctor. Most of the ticks we have in Kansas are associated with some type of disease and bites themselves can lead to localized infection.

It's important to identify the tick type because specific varieties of ticks carry different diseases. You have to take ticks seriously, especially if they become embedded in the skin.

For those who need help identifying ticks, you can always reach out to your local extension office.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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