



NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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(4/26/24) Southern 7 Health Department to Begin Tick Surveillance

Vectors are insects, ticks, rats, mice, birds and other animals that transmit disease-producing organisms to humans. To prevent the human diseases caused by these vectors, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) works closely with local health departments, governments, mosquito abatement programs and the public to monitor and control them. In May, Southern 7 Health Department (S7HD) will begin conducting active tick surveillance for all species including those causing Lyme disease.

Active tick surveillance means that S7HD Environmental Health staff will be actively going to each of the lower seven counties in Illinois to collect ticks. The purpose of the testing will be to determine what, if any, disease the ticks are carrying and also species identification. While there may be several varieties of tick species collected, only Ixodes ticks are submitted to the CDC for testing. All other species are tested by IDPH.

Only ticks collected through active surveillance will be tested. The health department cannot submit ticks for testing that have been attached to someone. If you are concerned about an attached tick, contact your local healthcare provider for possible testing and treatment. Symptoms of Lyme disease include fever and chills, general ill feeling, headache, joint pain, muscle pain, stiff neck, and circular rash that resembles a bullseye. General treatment of the disease includes a series of antibiotics.

To avoid being bit by a tick:

- Wear light-colored, protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts, long trousers, boots or sturdy shoes, and a head covering.
- Apply insect repellent containing 10 percent to 30 percent DEET primarily to clothes.
- Walk in the center of trails so weeds do not brush against you.
- Check you, others, and pets every two to three hours for ticks.
- Remove any tick promptly by grasping it with tweezers as close to the skin as possible and gently, but firmly, pull it straight out.
- Wash the bite area and your hands thoroughly with soap and water, and apply an antiseptic to the bite site.
- Make sure the property around your home is unattractive to ticks.
- Keep your grass mowed and keep weeds cut.

Southern 7 Health Department will be conducting tick collections in the spring and fall. Results from this spring's collection will be released this fall, with fall results released next spring. For more information, contact S7HD Environmental Health division at 618-634-2297 or visit dph.illinois.gov.

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