

Time-Out for Ticks!

Ticks are arachnids (related to spiders) that feed on the blood of animals. They are found throughout Colorado, commonly at higher elevations and can occur from early spring to late fall, but are less common during the hottest summer months. Rocky Mountain wood tick (*Dermacentor andersoni*) and American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*) are the most common ticks associated with people in the state. These ticks are usually found on grasses and low plants, waiting to attach to a host. They don't fall from trees, jump or fly! Some 30 species of ticks occur in Colorado. Ticks are important because pathogens (bacteria, viruses or protozoa) can be transmitted when infected ticks feed on humans.

Both of the common ticks in Colorado (Rocky Mountain wood tick and American dog tick) can transmit Colorado tick fever, tularemia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Western black-legged ticks, which transmit Lyme disease in the Pacific Coast states, are not known to occur in Colorado and no confirmed cases have originated here. Contact your medical provider with questions about symptoms and treatment.

Colorado Tick Fever (CTF) is believed to be the most common tick-borne disease in the state, and is tracked by the Colorado Department of Health. CTF is caused by a virus, is not transmitted from person to person (except by blood transfusion), and does not survive outside the host. CTF is not life threatening, and infection results in life-long immunity.

The other two tick-transmitted diseases -- Rocky Mountain spotted fever (caused by the bacteria *Rickettsia rickettsia*) and tularemia (caused by the bacteria *Francisella tularensis*) -- are not common in the state.



Above:
Close-up view of American
dog tick
(© 2006 Tom Murray)



Above:
Female Rocky Mountain wood
tick (photo courtesy of R. Davis,
Utah State University)



Above:
Male Rocky Mountain wood
tick (photo courtesy of R. Davis,
Utah State University)

Thanks to Ryan S. Davis,
Utah State University,
for reviewing this information.

Did You Know?

- The Rocky Mountain wood tick typically takes 12 to 24 hours to start feeding.
- Ticks are usually found from ground level to three feet above the ground.
- A tick uses carbon dioxide, scent, body heat and other stimuli to find a host.





Left:
Stages of tick engorgement
(photo courtesy of R. Davis,
Utah State University)



Right:
American dog tick
attaching to dog hair.
(© 2004 Troy Bartlett
www.naturecloseups.com)



Above:
Illustration of American dog tick bite.
(© 2009 WebMD, LLC.)



Managing Ticks with Integrated Pest Management

- Keep ticks off by wearing protective clothing. White or light colored long pants, long-sleeved shirts and other clothing can help exclude ticks or keep them from attaching to the skin. Insect repellent also can be used.
- Always conduct a thorough "tick check" after walking through areas where ticks might be present. Carefully look for and remove any ticks you may have picked up. Ticks take several hours to settle and begin feeding. This gives you time to find and remove them.
- If you find a tick, remove it by grasping it with tweezers, as close to the skin as possible. Pull upward and don't twist or jerk the tick. Never squeeze the body of the tick. After removing, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. Save the tick in rubbing alcohol in case symptoms develop. All other tick removal methods are not recommended.
- Two insect repellants are effective - products with permethrin, which is used only to treat clothing, and DEET, which is applied to exposed skin or clothing. Take precautions when using any insecticide. Do not apply DEET to hands or other areas that may come into contact with the mouth. After use, wash or bathe treated areas.
- If you develop a rash or fever within several weeks of removing a tick, see your doctor. Be sure and tell the doctor about your recent tick bite, when the bite occurred, and where you most likely acquired the tick.

For more info, check out:

Colorado Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases, W.S. Cranshaw and F.B Peairs, Colorado State University Extension no. 4.493.

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/insect/05593.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

www.cdc.gov



Above:
American dog tick laying eggs.
University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County