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Tuscarawas County
Health Department

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Tuscarawas County is Experiencing an Increase in Lyme Disease

DOVER—The Tuscarawas County Health Department (TCHD) has seen a 25% increase in reported Lyme disease cases from April through the end of May 2023 with 10 suspected Lyme cases among Tuscarawas County residents compared to 8 suspected cases during this same time period in 2022. Further, as of June 15, 2023, TCHD staff are already investigating another 15 suspected cases of Lyme disease for June.

“We have seen a steady increase in reported Lyme Disease case rates in Tuscarawas County over the past two to three years,” explained Amy Kaser, RN, Director of Nursing at the Tuscarawas County Health Department. “We also know that Lyme Disease cases are even higher due to under reporting, and we encourage county residents to take precautions to prevent Lyme disease and to seek treatment early if symptoms arise.”

Cases of Lyme disease in Tuscarawas County dogs are slightly higher for 2023 with 363 cases (12.26% or about 1 in 8 dogs tested for Lyme disease) as of June 8, 2023, according to the Companion Animal Parasite Council. For all of 2022, Tuscarawas County recorded a total of 618 positive cases (11.33% of dogs tested) of Lyme disease in dogs.

Tickborne diseases, like Lyme disease, are illnesses that can spread to people or pets through the bite of an infected tick. The longer the tick is attached to the person or animal, the greater the chance it will pass on any disease germs it may have. In general, it takes approximately 36 to 48 hours before the tick can transmit Lyme disease bacteria.

Ticks can attach to any part of the human body but prefer hard-to-see areas such as the groin, armpits, and scalp. Symptoms of Lyme Disease may include a characteristic skin rash, called erythema migrans (a reddish-purplish rash that may also represent a “bullseye”), fatigue, chills, fever, headache, muscle and joint pain, and/or swollen lymph nodes. Late-stage Lyme disease can produce symptoms such as severe headaches and neck stiffness, arthritis with severe joint pain and swelling, irregular heartbeat, and inflammation of the brain or spinal cord.

“It is very important to see your health care provider immediately if you notice any of the above symptoms and receive the appropriate treatment,” noted Kaser.

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Taking precautions such as avoiding wooded and brushy areas with high grass, tucking long pants into long socks, using insect repellent, walking in the middle of clear and well-traveled trails, wearing long sleeved shirts to keep ticks off the skin, and inspecting your skin after being outside are all ways to protect yourself from getting a tick bite. If a tick is identified, use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull away from your skin with steady, even pressure. Dispose of the tick by placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers. If you own pets, remember to always check them for ticks after being outside and remove ticks promptly. Also, talk with your pet's veterinarian about tick-preventive services such as Lyme disease vaccination.

For more information regarding Lyme Disease and tick safety recommendations, visit www.tchdnow.org/ticks or make an appointment with your medical provider. If you do not have a medical provider, TCHD welcomes new patients, and appointments can be made by calling 330-343-5555, ext. 1740, or ext. 1810.

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