

**NEWS RELEASE**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 1, 2013

**Contact:** Karrey Britt  
Communications Coordinator  
Office: (785) 856-7362

### **Health Department seeing increase in tick-related illnesses**

**(Lawrence, KS)** – Tick season peaks at the height of summer’s heat. In Kansas, ticks are prone to carry four diseases: Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Ehrlichiosis and Tularemia.

“Tick numbers are significantly higher this year, so it’s important to take the proper precautions to protect against them,” said Shirley Grubbs, Communicable Disease nurse at the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department. The Health Department investigated 20 cases of tick-related illnesses in June compared to two cases in June 2012.

Ticks lurk in tall grasses and bushy areas and then climb aboard humans as they walk by. Some ticks will attach quickly and others will wander looking for an area where the skin is thinner. They must be attached for more than 24 hours before they can transmit any pathogen; therefore, finding and removing all ticks in a timely manner is critical to preventing disease.

The following steps will help protect against ticks:

- Avoid wooded and bushy areas with tall grass and leaf litter.
- Keep grass cut and underbrush thinned in yards.
- Wear light-colored clothing so that ticks are easier to see and remove.
- Tuck pant legs into socks and boots. Wear long-sleeved shirts buttoned at the wrist. Tuck shirts into pants to keep ticks on the outside of clothing.
- Use repellents that contain at least 20 percent DEET on the exposed skin. Parents should apply this product to their children, ages 2 and older, avoiding hands, eyes and mouth. Repellents containing DEET should not be used on children, ages 2 and younger.
- Bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors, preferably within two hours, to wash off and more easily find ticks.
- Conduct tick checks on yourself, children and pets every four to six hours for several days after being in a tick-infested area. Ticks tend to attach in the following areas: under the arms, around the waist, behind the knees, between the legs, inside the belly button and in hair.
- Remove ticks as quickly as possible. The best method is to use tweezers and pull upward with steady, even pressure. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub or soap and water.

If you find a tick on your body, Grubbs suggests jotting down the date it was discovered. If symptoms such as a rash, fever, headache, joint or muscle pains or swollen lymph nodes appear, contact your doctor as soon as possible. Tick-borne diseases can cause mild symptoms treatable at home with antibiotics to severe infections requiring hospitalization.

For more information about ticks, call Health Department clinic at 785-843-3060 or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [cdc.gov/ticks](http://cdc.gov/ticks).

### **About the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department**

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department has served the Lawrence and Douglas County community for more than 120 years. Its mission is to advance policies, practices and programs that promote health for all, prevent disease and protect the environment.

-30-

Together, day by day, building a healthy community

[www.ldchealth.org](http://www.ldchealth.org)

