Deer ticks (Ixodes scapularis) are active from late March until mid November in Wisconsin. Ticks stop being active only when there is snow on the ground. Adult deer ticks are somewhat smaller than the wood tick (American Dog tick), have a reddish orange abdomen and lack whitish markings on the scutum (see picture). Deer ticks have three life stages; larvae, nymph and adult. It takes two years to complete their lifecycle and during that time deer ticks feed only three times. The immature stages feed on small rodents including white footed mice. Feeding on infected rodents is how the deer ticks can acquire any one of three human diseases - the spirochete that causes Lyme disease, the bacteria that causes anaplasmosis or a protozoan that causes a third disease called Babesiosis.
The highest numbers of deer ticks are found in brushy and wooded areas with moderate under-story in west central and southwest Wisconsin. Deer ticks are becoming more common in eastern Wisconsin. Adult deer ticks are most active in spring and from mid October until 1st snow. Nymphs are most active during the summer.

**Lyme disease** - It takes a deer tick 24-48 hours of feeding before they can transmit Lyme disease to humans. In Wisconsin historically about 15-20% of the adult deer ticks and about 7-9% of the nymphs carry the disease but the infectivity rate can vary from 3-50% in selected areas. Larval ticks do not carry the disease. Doing daily tick checks is very important in reducing the chance of transmission as this will remove the tick before it can transmit any disease. There has been no evidence in the laboratory of wood ticks transmitting Lyme disease.

If you develop a rash, fever, body aches, stiff neck, or flu-like symptoms after a tick bite, contact your doctor. Treated early the diseases transmitted by deer ticks are easily treated with antibiotics. If left untreated there are numerous potential complications that are more difficult to control.
TICK CONTROL

Control of Deer ticks in outdoor areas is difficult. While several insecticides are labeled for outdoor tick control, they are usually not effective in totally eliminating ticks in large areas of tall grass, brush and heavily wooded sites. There are however, some management techniques that can discourage a buildup of ticks. Ticks must be in areas of high humidity in order to survive, therefore, reducing the humidity by keeping grass mowed, removing brush, and pruning trees to allow more sunlight to dry the soil. Limited insecticide sprays containing products such as permethrin, bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, deltamethrin, lamda-cyhalothrin or carbaryl (Sevin) to the edges of mowed areas or along paths or trails can also be effective in reducing tick numbers. A band of 10-20 ft should be treated along the edge and into the brushy or grassy area with sufficient volume to wet the ground. Treatment is most effective in later September or in April when there is less foliage to intercept the spray. Only one treatment is needed per year. If ticks are migrating in from edges consider removing leaf litter and brush. Mowed turf areas or wood or gravel mulched areas are hostile environments to deer ticks.

For personal protection when working or walking in tick infested areas cover the skin as much as possible by wearing long sleeve shirts and long pants with the legs tucked into socks. Sprays containing permethrin can be applied to clothing to kill any ticks that come into contact with the garment. A single spray can last for two weeks or more and is very effective. Repellents containing the active ingredient DEET can be applied to both clothing and skin. DEET does not kill ticks but prevents them from attaching to treated areas of skin.

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