

NEWS



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July 14, 2011

For Immediate Release

07-14-11 THIS WEEK IN ORANGE COUNTY BY EDWARD A. DIANA

If you're like me, the warm weather of summer probably finds you spending more time outdoors. For your health and safety, it's important to take some precautions to safeguard against Lyme disease and rabies which can be prevalent this time of year.

Dr. Jean M. Hudson, Orange County Commissioner of Health, reminds residents that prevention is essential when it comes to Lyme and rabies. For rabies, it starts with a pet's owner – be sure to have your family pet properly vaccinated. When the family pet is unvaccinated and exposed to rabies it can threaten the lives of all family members, warns Dr. Hudson. In addition to keeping vaccinations current, she offers some easy-to-follow tips to protect against rabies.

- Never touch unfamiliar or wild animals.
- Avoid direct contact with stray animals as they may not have been vaccinated against rabies.
- If you are bitten, wash bite wounds with soap and water and seek medical attention immediately.
- If your pet is bitten, consult your veterinarian immediately.
- Never adopt wild animals, including cats, kittens, dogs, and puppies or bring them into your home.
- Do not try to nurse sick or injured wild animals back to health. Call animal control or an animal rescue group so they can care for the animal safely.
- Make sure your trash cans are secure and do not leave pet food out. You do not want to attract wild animals near your home.

When it comes to Lyme disease, prevention of tick bites is critical.

- Do a tick check daily on yourself, your children, and pets. Scan your body for ticks at the end of each day or first thing in the morning, especially if pets sleep on the bed. Pay special attention to scalp, hairline, ears, armpits, waistband area, groin, and behind the knees. Feel for tiny bumps that may feel like a scab, but may actually be a feeding tick.
- Avoid areas where ticks are most abundant, including wooded areas, tall grass, brush, and bushes.
- When you do go into those areas wear protective clothing. Wear light-colored clothing to spot ticks that are crawling on you. Tuck shirt into pants and pants into socks.
- Ticks should be removed as soon as possible. If ticks are removed within 24 hours of attaching, the risk of getting Lyme disease is minimal.

If a tick is found attached to the skin, remove it with care. Ticks should never be removed with fingers, chemicals, petroleum jelly, or lighters. Chemicals, heat, or squeezing the body of the tick can force the bacteria that cause Lyme disease into the site. Ticks should only be removed with tweezers, pulling upward, with a steady, gentle force. If the mouthpiece breaks off, remove it as you would a splinter. Apply antiseptic to the site after removal, wash your hands thoroughly, and contact your healthcare provider.

Visit the Health Department pages on the County website at www.orangecountygov.com for more information about clinics, testing, and prevention.

Until next week, wishing you good health and happiness.

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