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OROVILLE — “Don’t let the bugs bite” is not just good bedtime advice, it’s also just good sense, according to a new warning from the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District.

Tick season is in full swing, and the district is warning hikers, campers and every sort of outdoor enthusiast to be aware of the small but mighty bite of a tick.

Matt Ball, control district manager, said he wants people to be able to enjoy themselves outdoors, but to take a few, easy measures to prevent a “potentially lifelong, debilitating disease.”

That’s because ticks can carry numerous diseases, like Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, anaplasmosis, babesiosis and perhaps the most well known tick-borne illness: Lyme Disease.

The control district routinely does surveillance in popular, local wildlife areas including the trails around Lake Oroville, Upper Bidwell Park and Lake Wyandotte, and send the captured ticks to a lab to see if they are carrying disease, Ball said.

Lately, they have identified an increased local population of the western black-legged tick — sometimes referred to as a deer tick — which is a known carrier for Lyme disease.

Untreated Lyme disease can result in fever, rash, facial paralysis and arthritis. Early signs include fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle and joint aches and swollen lymph nodes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

But Ball says the risk can be minimized with some easy preparation, and there’s certainly no need to call off your outdoor plans in fear of the tiny critter.

“Lyme disease is not easy to get,” he said. “The tick has to be on you and feeding for at least 24 hours to transmit.”

That means after you go outside, be sure to check “every crack and crevice,” Ball said, or have a friend or partner help you. There’s a short window of opportunity to remove the tick carefully and avoid transmission.

Ticks are attracted to humid areas of the body, so check your neck, behind your ears and in between joints too, as they are particularly vulnerable to bites, he added.

In addition, the control district recommends using insect repellent with at least 20 percent DEET or with permethrin content on exposed skin and clothing. Wear long, light-colored clothing so the dark ticks are easier to spot, and routinely check yourself and your pets for the tiny invaders. If you don’t want to wear long clothing or use chemicals, Ball said be sure to check for bites very, very carefully.

A fully-engorged, adult tick can be the size of a dime, Ball said, but the juvenile form (known as a “nymph”) is much, much smaller, from approximately the size of a BB gun pellet all the way down to a pinhead.

Ticks are found most commonly in naturally-vegetated areas, said a release from the control district, and are most active during the spring and early summer months when they can be found on logs, grasses, branches and among damp leaves. Because nymphs are so small, it’s particularly difficult to tell if you’ve been bitten, but a telltale, target-like mark is a common indicator.

If you think you have been bitten, use a pair of finely-pointed tweezers to gently and firmly pull the tick straight out — do not twist, crush, burn or squeeze the tick.

To get the tick identified, free of cost, put it in a jar or clear, plastic bag with a piece of cotton or tissue moistened with water, and bring it to the control district offices at 5117 Larkin Road in Oroville.

“When the grass is green, the ticks that can harm you are out,” Ball warned. “Always be vigilant.”