

# Residents cautioned to avoid ticks and tick-borne diseases

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With the arrival of cool and wet weather, ticks of medical concern are now active again. Butte County residents need to be alert for ticks that may be carrying Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases. Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District's (District) recent surveillance activities on Chico's Bidwell Park trails and the Lake Oroville Recreation Area trails have identified increased populations of the western black-legged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*), sometimes referred to as the deer tick.

The District wants to remind residents to take precautions while hiking, camping, biking and enjoying other outdoor activities. By taking measures to reduce exposure to ticks, residents can help protect themselves from tick-borne diseases.

Ticks are often found in naturally vegetated areas throughout Butte County. Ticks attach to animals and feed on their blood over several days. Preferring cool and moist environments, ticks are found in shaded grass, shrubs, and in leaf litter under trees in oak woodlands.

An individual may become infected with the bacteria that causes Lyme disease when they are bitten by an infected western black-legged tick. The smaller immature form of the tick known as a "nymph" is most active during the spring and early summer months. About the size of a pinhead, nymphs are often found on logs, grasses, fallen branches or tree limbs, low-growing shrubs, and among damp leaves that accumulate under trees. Because nymphs are so small, people may not notice if one attaches to them.

Early symptoms of Lyme disease often include a spreading "bull's-eye" rash, which is usually accompanied by symptoms such as fever and body aches. Prompt treatment with antibiotics can cure the disease, particularly when it is diagnosed early. If left untreated, symptoms can progress into arthritis or nervous system disorders.