

## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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### **Time to Check for Ticks**

Now that the weather is getting warmer, Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) would like to remind everyone to stay safe from tick bites that can spread disease to humans. Diseases carried by ticks in southwest Nebraska are: Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Tularemia and Ehrlichiosis. Although there are ticks that carry Lyme Disease in other areas of Nebraska, these ticks have not been found in southwest Nebraska.

“Several tick-borne diseases are transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected tick,” shares Melissa Propp, SWNPHD Clinic Manager. “These diseases can be severe or even fatal if not treated in the first few days of symptoms. See your doctor immediately if you have been bitten by a tick and then experience symptoms like high fever, muscle pain, severe headache, or rash.”

This year SWNPHD will be working with Nebraska Department of Health and Humans Services (DHHS) to help identify which ticks are living in the health district by doing tick drags in strategic areas. Tick dragging is a method for collecting ticks where a strip of white cloth mounted on a pole is tied to a rope and dragged around through areas that are likely to have ticks. The ticks are easy to see on the white cloth and the different species can be identified and counted. SWNPHD will be doing tick drags from May until July.

It is a good idea to take preventive measures against ticks year-round, but especially in warmer months when ticks are most active. Some suggestions include:

- Use repellents that contain 20-30% DEET on exposed skin and clothing for protection that lasts up to several hours. Always check the label for proper use instructions.
- Parents should apply DEET products to their children, avoiding hands, eyes, and mouth.
- Use products that contain permethrin on clothing, gear, and tents.
- Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Check for ticks after coming in from outside, especially from wooded areas or areas with long grass/weeds.
- Wash clothes right away and put into a dryer on the hottest setting to kill any hidden ticks that remain.
- Mow lawns regularly, remove leaf litter or brush and prune low-lying bushes to let in more sunlight.
- Keep woodpiles in sunny areas off the ground.

“If you are in areas with the potential for ticks, we recommend that you bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors,” explains Propp. “It will be easier to find and wash off ticks that are crawling instead of attached.”

***We work to prevent disease and injury, promote optimal health, and protect the health of the public.***

For more information on tick-borne diseases, contact SWNPHD by calling 308-345- 4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram or view the website at [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Call (308) 345-4223; one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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