

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever Case in Southwest Nebraska

One case of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) has been confirmed in the health district of Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) which includes: Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties.

“Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is spread to humans by the bite of an infected tick,” shares Melissa Propp, SWNPHD Public Health Nurse. “RMSF can be severe or even fatal if not treated in the first few days of symptoms. Contact your doctor right away if you have been bitten by a tick and experience any symptoms.”

Symptoms of RMSF include fever, chills, headache, abdominal pain, vomiting, fatigue, and muscle pain. A rash may also develop but usually not until after the first few days. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about 10% of people with RMSF never develop a rash. When someone does develop a rash, it begins with small flat, pink spots on the wrists, forearms, and ankles and spreads to the trunk. The rash is not itchy and appears two to five days after they first get a fever.

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.
- Parents should apply DEET products to their children, avoiding hands, eyes and mouth.
- Use products that contain permethrin on clothing, gear, and tents.
- Walk in the center of trails.
- Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Mow lawns regularly, remove leaf litter/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.” Here are other ways to prevent tick bites after being outdoors:

- Conduct a full-body tick check on yourself and children as soon as you can.
- Look closely under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist and especially in hair.
- Examine gear and pets. Ticks can ride into the home on clothing and pets, then attach to a person later.
- Tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for an hour to kill any remaining ticks.

For more information on Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, contact SWNPHD by calling 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street in McCook, and 418 North Spruce Street in Ogallala. Follow us on Facebook, TikTok, You Tube and Instagram or visit swhealth.ne.gov for more information and resources.

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