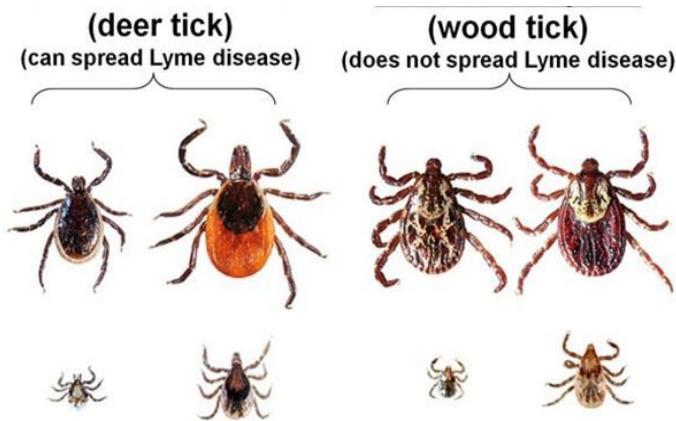


Lyme Disease- an ounce of prevention...

Life in our beautiful Oak Savanna forest is something to be savoured and appreciated. However, this environment also poses some risks that residents need to be aware of, both for their own welfare and those of visitors.



Deer ticks are the size of sesame seeds.

Bull's eye rash is common sign of Lyme infection but may appear 3 to 30 days after the bite, too long for early intervention

THE CAUSE Lyme disease is a bacterial illness that is spread by the borrelia burgdorferi, a spiral bacterium, in deer tick insect bites. Host may not feel the bite because anaesthetic is injected by the tick into the site. Once infected, the victim (human or animal) will suffer the consequences in multiple stages that stretch from the first bite to the spread of Lyme antibodies within the blood, and these telltale flu-like symptoms: headache, joint pain, fever, fatigue, swollen glands, spasms and weakness.

CHALLENGING DIAGNOSIS In Canada, accurate diagnosis has been a problem because symptoms are similar to ALS, fibromyalgia, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. Prompt diagnosis is important because the disease can move into a chronic phase where blurred vision, poor balance and waves of migrating pain lead to diminished quality of life and even death as was the case of Gabe Magnotta, co-founder of Magnotta Wines who died at the age of 60 from Lyme Disease.

Pinery Park is one area of Ontario that has been designated as a risk area for Lyme Disease by Lambton Public Health. So a walk in our woods as well as Pinery involves some precautions:

- wearing long pants tucked into socks, long sleeved shirts and hats, close-toed shoes
- use of insect repellent containing DEET
- wearing light coloured clothes so ticks are visible
- inspection of pets and family members for ticks following the walk

WHAT TO DO If you find a deer tick that may have been attached for 24 hours or longer

- wearing gloves, remove tick with tweezers aiming as close to the skin as possible, pulling straight upward. Try not to squash or burn the insect as bacteria may be released.
- Clean the site of the bite with soap and water
- go to South Huron Emergency Department in Exeter (open 24/7) for examination of the bite site and possible prophylactic shot of antibiotic to avoid the onset of Lyme Disease symptoms Please note that Grand Bend Medical Centre's walk-in clinic is open 9 a.m.-12 noon Saturdays only. It is important for infected individuals to receive a shot within 72 hours before the bacteria migrate from the blood to surrounding tissues.
- save the tick in a container and take to Lambton Public Health, 160 Exmouth St., Point Edward, ON N7T 7Z6 1-800-667-1839 or 59 Main St, Forest . The tick will be sent to Winnipeg for testing.

When in doubt, go to emergency to have the bite site checked out.

THE WHITE FOOTED MOUSE

The white-footed mouse is a highly efficient transmitter of Lyme Disease. Mice and ticks get along swimmingly. Other animals, such as opossums, groom away ticks — and sometimes kill them. But white-footed mice tolerate ticks covering their faces and ears . Mice pass Lyme bacteria to ticks, which can then pass them on to deer, other animals and humans.

FOREST FRAGMENTATION

Approximately 200 years ago, widespread deforestation was carried out for farming and housing projects. Since then a lot of the forest has come back — but it's not the same forest as before, says ecologist Rick Ostfeld. Today it's all broken up into little pieces, with roads, farms and housing developments. For mice, this has been great news. They tend to thrive in these degraded, fragmented landscapes, Ostfeld says, because their predators need big forests to survive. Without as many foxes, hawks and owls to eat them, mice crank out babies. And we end up with forests packed with mice — mice that are chronically infected with Lyme and covered with ticks.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

~Federal Government is dedicating 4 million dollars for Lyme Disease research and treatment and the G Magnotta Foundation is gifting 1.4 million to U of Guelph to create a research lab

~vector-borne diseases are being tracked as climate change expands areas being affected

~keeping deer populations under control by not feeding them and through culls and increasing small mammal and reptile numbers will help reduce Lyme infestations

~restoring forest corridors to link existing forests will support more rodent predators keeping white footed mouse populations down



The Five-lined Skink, Carolinian Population, is an endangered species that lives in Huron Woods. It is a **terminal host**, which eats ticks but does not pass bacteria on to other animals including predators. Native plant and full forest conservation assist the skink to survive and reproduce, thus limiting the potential spread of Lyme Disease in our area.