

Ticks in St. Joseph County

Ticks are found in wooded or grassy areas that are frequented by the deer, raccoons, and other wildlife that serve as their hosts. While tick borne diseases occur sporadically and infrequently in Indiana, there is potential for disease transmission. There are three ticks commonly found in Indiana:



The American Dog Tick - *Dermacentor variabilis*
(also known as Wood Tick)

Rocky Mountain spotted fever is primarily transmitted by one of the larger and more common ticks in the county – the American dog tick. Symptoms of RMSF tend to appear within ten

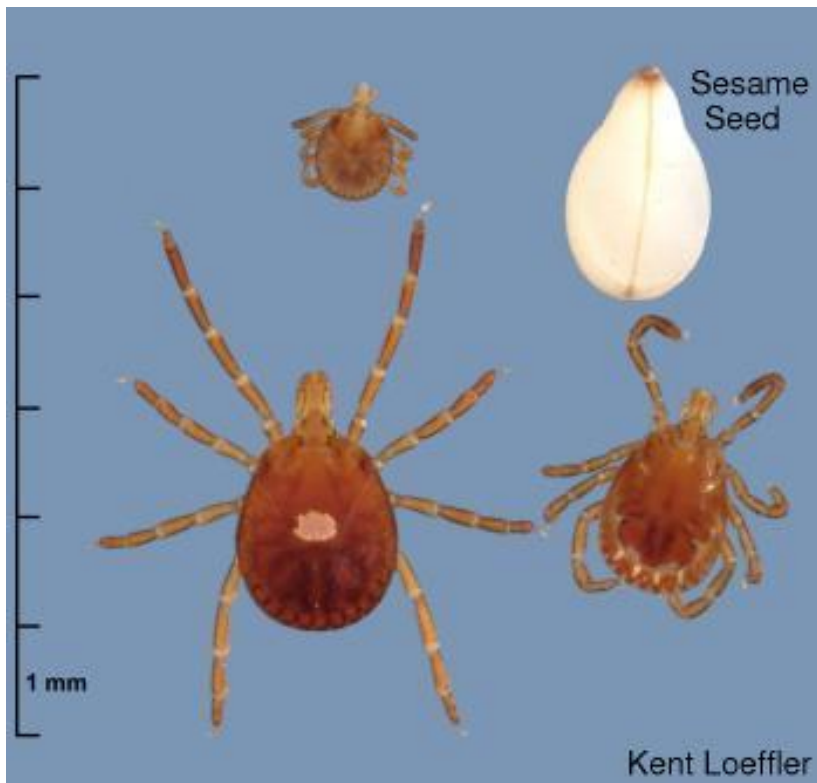
days following a bite by an infected tick and may include headache, chills, fever, and muscle aches. A spotted rash appearing on the wrists and ankles and later spreading to the palms, soles, and eventually to the rest of the body is characteristic. RMSF is treatable with antibiotics and can be fatal if left untreated.



The Blacklegged Tick – *Ixodes scapularis*
(also known as Deer Tick)

Lyme disease is commonly transmitted by the blacklegged tick. Lyme disease symptoms usually appear within 1 to 2 weeks and may include fatigue,

fever, headache, swollen glands, and pain in muscles, joints, and neck. A rash spreading in a distinctive bull's-eye pattern may appear. Lyme disease is treatable with antibiotics. Left untreated, the disease may progress to chronic joint, neurological, or cardiac problems. Removing a blacklegged tick within 24 hours of attachment significantly reduces the chance of contracting Lyme disease.



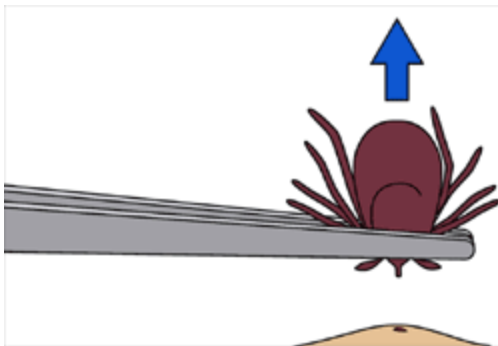
The Lone Star Tick

— *Amblyomma americanum*

Lone star ticks infected with the bacterium *Ehrlichia chaffeensis*, the cause of human monocytic ehrlichiosis (HME) have been collected in southern Indiana. HME is characterized by flulike symptoms that typically manifest after an incubation period of 5 to 10 days. Human granulocytic ehrlichiosis (HGE)

has symptoms similar to HME, but is associated with the blacklegged tick. Both HME and HGE are treatable with antibiotics. The lone star tick is uncommon in St. Joseph County.

Protecting yourself from ticks



Educating yourself and following these simple steps will help you protect yourself from these diseases. Avoiding areas likely to be infested with ticks is the best way to avoid the potential for disease. However, if you anticipate entering an area where there are ticks, you can reduce your risk by:

- Wearing light colored long sleeves and pants
- Tucking shirts into pants and pants into socks
- Wearing closed-toed shoes
- Applying insect repellent containing DEET to exposed skin
- Applying permethrin to clothes and shoes (**do not apply permethrin to skin**)
- Carefully follow label directions when using any repellent

Check your entire body for ticks **immediately** after leaving areas likely to have ticks and take a hot shower. Ticks can hide in your clothes, so wash your clothing in hot water as well. Checking for ticks daily is very important when visiting these areas as Lyme disease transmission is unlikely to occur before 24 hours of tick attachment.



If you discover a tick attached to your skin, do not attempt to remove it by burning or applying an irritant as this may increase the chances of disease transmission and/or infection. Promptly remove the tick by grasping its head with tweezers and pulling straight out with a steady motion. Wash the bite area with warm soapy water and apply an antiseptic. You may wish to save the tick in a jar for future reference should symptoms develop. If you are experiencing symptoms you suspect are related to a tick bite, consult your physician immediately. Be aware that ticks can enter your home on pets. Check your pets often and remove ticks in the manner described above.

Image courtesy of CDC Division of Viral and Rickettsial Diseases.

Links

[Purdue Extension Tick Biology](#)

[Indiana State Department of Health Tick-borne Disease Prevention](#)