

It is tick season_Statewide

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by Laurie Kerzicnik
Email Laurie Kerzicnik

The common ticks in Montana this time of the year are the Rocky Mountain wood tick, *Dermacentor andersoni*, and the American dog tick, *Dermacentor variabilis*. The two species look very similar. We don't have either of the two species of black-legged ticks (formerly deer ticks) that vector Lyme disease in Montana.



Figure 1. Rocky Mountain wood tick, *Dermacentor andersoni*. Bozeman, MT.

The Rocky Mountain wood tick is very common in the Rocky Mountain region and is found on livestock, companion animals, and humans in the spring/summer in Montana. It likes stream corridors, grassy meadows, and south-facing sagebrush slopes. The American dog tick is found in eastern Montana. Neither of these species vector Lyme disease.

Diseases Vectored by Montana Ticks:

The Rocky Mountain wood tick transmits Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) and Colorado tick fever (CTF). RMSF transmission is rare in our state; most cases occur in the south Atlantic Region. The tick must remain attached for at least 10 hours before transmission of RMSF can occur. Signs of infection include a severe headache, chills, fever, and aches/pains. Also, red/purple/black spots will occur around the bite area with a rash. The disease is mostly in remote areas. Those living in the South and East have greater exposure to RMSF than those in the Rocky Mountain States. Colorado tick fever occurs only in western states. In Montana cases have been diagnosed west of the Continental Divide, southwest and south-central Montana. Symptoms of CTF occur within four days and include chills, headache, fever, muscular ache, and general malaise.

Prevention:

Use a repellent like DEET or picaridin especially on pants and socks when in ticky areas and check for ticks after being outdoors. If in a brush-type area or an area with tall grasses, always do your tick checks right afterwards.

Removing a tick from your skin:

You want to find and remove ticks as soon as possible. There are some common folklore tick removal methods such as “backing out of the tick with a burning match” that should not be attempted. This method is not safe and doesn’t work. It is important to try to thoroughly remove the tick and the mouthparts. The tick has mouthparts which are barbed and used for insertion into the skin. If these break off, it can be a further source of irritation and possibly infection. Also, the crushing of the mouthparts can allow for disease transmission to occur through the skin if not removed properly.

Place forceps (try to use blunt curved forceps or tweezers) around the tick mouthparts as close to the skin as possible. Remove the tick with a slow, steady pull away from the skin. Don’t jerk or twist the tick (Fig. 2). Avoid getting or crushing any tick parts on you. Disinfect your skin with alcohol and wash your hands with soap and water.

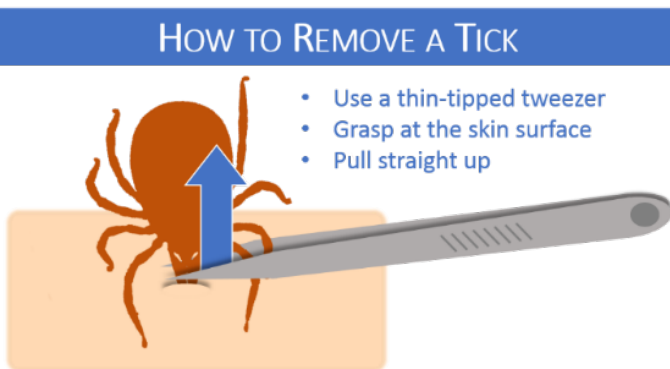


Figure 2. How to remove a tick.

In Montana, we cannot test the tick itself for diseases. A website can be accessed [here](#) for further information on testing ticks for diseases and where you can send them. You must keep the tick alive to test for diseases.

If you have further questions about the ticks and diseases, some other resources include

- [ticks of veterinary and public health importance in Montana](#)
- [information on wildlife safety tips](#)
- [diseases vectored by ticks](#)
- [information from the CDC](#)