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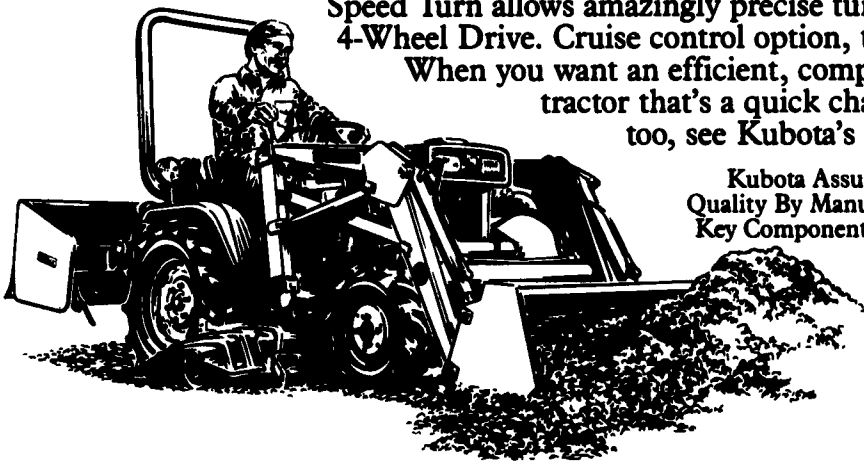
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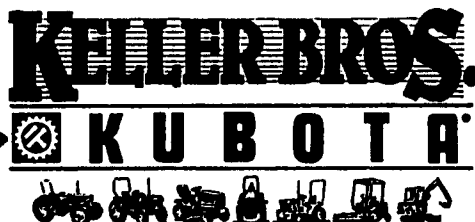
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PENNSYLVANIA'S LARGEST KUBOTA DEALER

Wanted: Ticks, Dead Or Alive

CREAMERY (Montgomery Co.) — As spring and summer approach, many Pennsylvanians will spend more time in the woods. If you find a tick while hiking or camping in Montgomery County, bring it to the Penn State Cooperative Extension office located in Creamery on Route 113, one mile south of Skippack. "You could participate in a survey designed to map the distribution of Lyme disease and other problems caused by ticks," said Tim Fritz, county agent.

Stevens Jacobs, project associate in Penn State's department of entomology, would like to examine the ticks Pennsylvanians find on themselves, their children, or their pets. County offices will forward the ticks, dead or alive, to Jacobs, Dr. Ke Chung Kim, and Dr. Robert Snetsinger, professors of entomology.

"The purpose of this survey is to determine the range and distribution of *Ixodes dammini*, the deer tick is the main carrier of Lyme disease," Jacobs said. "Other ticks can carry the disease as well, so we want to see any tick someone finds. With a strong response from all counties, we can get a good idea of where Lyme disease risk areas are across the state".

"Your county extension office has kits with vials to hold the tick and a questionnaire asking for information important for the survey, such as where the tick was found and what type of host it had," said Fritz. The kit will be sent to University Park for a free analysis.

Lyme disease is caused by *Borrelia burgdorferi*, a coiled bacteria or spirochete. Jacobs will determine the species of each tick he receives, but he can only test those ticks that arrive alive to see if they

carry the Lyme disease bacteria. "We'll send the results to our analysis back to the county office and Fritz will contact the person who sent us the tick," Jacobs said, stressing that this analysis is not a medical diagnosis. "We're only surveying the extent of the ticks and the disease spirochetes. We'll let a person know whether or not we found spirochetes in the tick, but we are not here to give medical advice."

Jacobs doesn't want people to actively search for ticks. "But if you find a tick on a person or animal, remove it with a set of fine forceps or tweezers," he said. "Grasp the tick by the mouthparts or as close to the skin of the host as possible and gently pull it straight out." Applying heat or chemical to remove a tick is risky. "That could make the tick regurgitate its stomach contents, increasing the chance of infection," Jacobs said.

The entomologists will be collecting ticks for the next three years, mapping areas of high and low spirochete counts. "We'd like to be able to chart the relative risks of going to Pinchot State Forest versus going to the Allegheny Plateau, for example. Right now that type of information just isn't available."

When the researchers have enough data, they will compare a county with a high incidence of Lyme disease to a county with a low incidence. "We'll examine similar habitats in those two counties to try to determine why one area has a high rate of disease and why the other does not," Jacobs said. The researchers ultimately hope to use this information to develop a program to advise Pennsylvanians on the relative risks associated with outdoor activities in various habitats.

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