

Pa. Physician General Recommends Lyme Disease Prevention

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Pennsylvania Physician General Dr. Robert Muscalus urged Pennsylvanians to take some simple precautions to protect themselves against the bacterial infection lyme disease, carried by deer ticks.

"As warm weather arrives, people need to become informed about lyme disease and the steps they can take to avoid infection," Dr. Muscalus said.

The Physician General suggested the following precautions to decrease the risk of being bitten by an infected tick:

- Use insect repellent containing DEET (N-diethyl-metatoluamide) on clothes and exposed skin, except the face. Concentrations of less than 40 percent are recommended, and directions on product labels should be followed to avoid skin irritation and other toxic effects.

- Avoid tick-infested areas, such as high grass and weeds.

- Wear light-colored clothing so ticks can be spotted more easily.

- Wear a hat, long-sleeved shirt, and long pants for added protection.

- Tuck pant legs into socks or boots, and tuck shirts into pants.

- Tape the areas where pants and socks meet.

- Walk in the center of trails

to avoid overhanging brush.

- Check for ticks after leaving potentially tick-infested areas. Daily tick checks are advised for people living in the areas of the highest lyme disease incidence.

In 2000, Dr. Muscalus noted 1,911 cases of confirmed lyme disease were reported in Pennsylvania. He said that Chester County led the state in confirmed cases of lyme disease last year with 476 cases. Montgomery County reported 379 cases, followed by Bucks County with 368 cases; Philadelphia, 157 cases; York County, 141 cases; Northampton County, 42 cases; and Berks County, 41 cases.

A bite from an infected deer tick — a tiny insect that can be smaller than a pinhead or a poppy seed — transmits the disease. In its early stages, the tick feeds on white-footed mice that live in wooded, bushy areas. It later moves on to larger mammals, including dogs, cats, deer and humans.

Lyme disease usually begins as a small, red (often "bull's-eye-shaped") rash. The disease can progress quickly to flu-like symptoms, chills, swollen lymph nodes and fatigue. Left untreated, the disease can lead to more severe symptoms months or years later, including

arthritis, heart-rhythm irregularities, and nervous-system abnormalities.

Dr. Muscalus said it takes at least 24 to 48 hours for a tick to transmit the lyme disease infection, so early detection and prompt, proper removal of ticks is a very important prevention step. Ticks should be removed using fine-tipped tweezers, grasping the tick as close to the skin as possible and slowly pulling it straight out. An antiseptic or antibiotic ointment then should be applied to the wound. Never apply mineral oil, heat or

any other substance that could cause the tick to inject the bacteria into the wound.

Always wash your hands after handling a tick.

Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics. Patients treated in the early stages of the disease usually respond very well, and even those treated in much later stages usually recover satisfactorily — although a small number may have recurring symptoms or permanent joint damage.

Muscalus advises people who think they may have been exposed to a deer tick to consult

with their doctor for proper diagnosis and treatment.

The disease was first identified in the U.S. in 1975, near Lyme, Conn.

The typical lyme disease season in Pennsylvania runs from May to November, with the peak months being June through September.

For more information on lyme disease, call the Department of Health's toll-free help line, at 1-877-PA-HEALTH, or visit the department's Website <http://www.health.state.pa.us>.

FB Applauds Tax Provision To Encourage Food Donations

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A bill approved by a House committee would result in more food for millions of hungry and needy Americans, in part by providing farmers who donate food to charities the same tax treatment as corporate donors, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

In a letter earlier to the House Ways and Means Committee, AFBF and a coalition of farm and hunger groups urged sup-

port for a provision of the Community Solutions Act of 2001 (H.R. 7). Specifically, the letter praised a section of the bill that "corrects current inequities in the tax code" to recognize charitable food donations from farmers at a level equal to that of corporate donors.

"America's farmers and ranchers have always supported hunger relief," the groups stated. "Although thousands of farmers and ranchers regularly donate products to hunger relief

activities, the current tax law is a hindrance to their food donations in many ways."

The groups stated that the current tax code only provides corporations a "special deduction" for donations to food banks and excludes farmers, ranchers and other small business owners who donate.

"Under current law, if a major food company donates a truckload of unprocessed apples to a food bank and a local farmer donates a truckload of apples that he just harvested to the food bank, the food company would be eligible for the (special donation) but the farmer would not," the groups pointed out. "The current tax law is not only unfair, it is an obstacle to helping us feed the hungry."

As approved by the House Ways and Means Committee, Section 103 of H.R. 7 would realign tax laws governing donated food by extending the "special rule deduction" to all business taxpayers, especially farmers and ranchers. Section 103 also would increase this deduction to the fair market value of the donation.

A similar provision is in other pending measures, including the Good Samaritan Hunger Relief Tax Incentive Act (S. 37/H.R. 990) and the Tax Empowerment and Relief for Farmers and Fishermen Act (S. 312.)

In addition to AFBF, groups signing the letter included America's Second Harvest, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, National Farmers Union, National Milk Producers Federation, and United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association.

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