



Risks of Infection in the Countryside



2. Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease)

- This is a bacterial infection contracted through contact with soil or water contaminated by the urine of infected animals, such as cattle, pigs and rodents (Weil's Disease)



Brown rat © Steve Davis

How common is Leptospirosis?

- There are usually less than 40 cases in England and Wales each year, although there were 76 cases recently. Most patients have contracted the condition from freshwater sources and animal or fish feed contaminated with rat urine..

How is it caught?

- The bacteria may enter the body through skin breaks, cuts and scratches, and through the skin lining the mouth and covering the eyes.

Symptoms of Leptospirosis

- In 90% of cases, only mild symptoms such as headache, chills and muscle pain may be experienced. Sometimes, the infection is more severe with very serious features, such as internal bleeding, jaundice and kidney failure. In rare cases the diseases can be fatal.

Can Leptospirosis be prevented?

- Wearing appropriate clothing, covering skin breaks (with a waterproof plaster) and washing out eye splashes with clean, soapy water reduces the risk. If no clean water is available, then complete drying of the skin is advised.
- Thorough washing of hands before eating or drinking is good practice.

Can Leptospirosis be treated?

- If, within 30 days of possible exposure, you are unwell, with muscle pain and chills, contact your GP and mention that you may have been exposed to infected water. Outcome depends on early diagnosis and treatment.
- Treatment involves the use of antibiotics. In severe cases admission to hospital is required.

Further information

www.gov.uk/leptospirosis

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Leptospirosis



Public Health England

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1. Ticks/Lyme Disease



Courtesy PHE



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2. Leptospirosis & Weil's Disease



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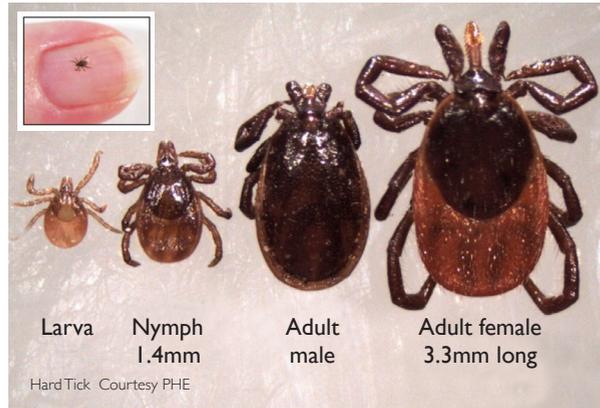


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I. Ticks and Tick Bites/Lyme Disease

A tick is a small spider-like animal, its size depends upon the stage in its life cycle in which the larva changes to nymph to adult. All ticks require blood meals from a host (such as birds, rodents and humans) to progress through this cycle. Before attaching itself to its host the tick lives on a wide variety of plants and leaf litter found in urban parks and gardens as well as the wider countryside.



Importance of a Tick Bite

Whilst taking the blood meal, a tick can transmit bacteria to the host.

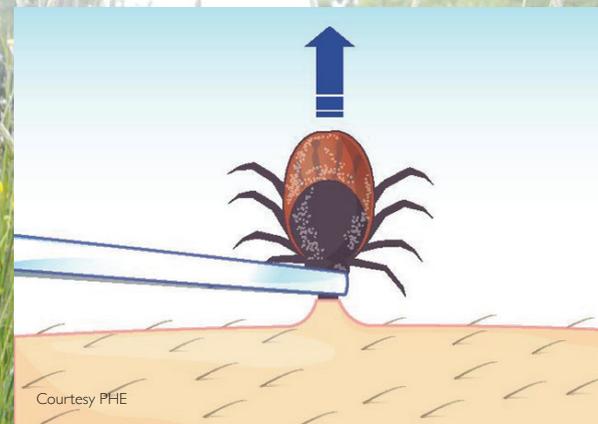
- In the human, diseases such as Lyme Disease may follow. This disease may have important long term health consequences, especially for the nervous and cardiovascular systems. There are about 2,000 to 3,000 new cases in the U K each year.
- Lyme disease may be entirely without symptoms, although it may start with a circular reddened rash spreading from the site of the bite. The disease may only be discovered at a later blood test when the infection is more widespread.
- Since the bite may be painless, the human may be entirely unaware of the bite. Up to a third of patients are unaware of having previously been bitten by a tick.

Prevention of Tick Bite

- Ticks may bite at any time of the year.
- Wearing light-coloured clothing makes ticks more visible. Long sleeved shirts and wearing trousers tucked into socks reduces possible exposure.
- Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective.
- After working outdoors, a thorough **Tick Check** of clothes and body should be performed. Ticks prefer warm and moist areas, particularly the waist and groin: the head and scalp should also be checked. Remember; the larvae and nymphs of ticks may be very small!

Tick removal

- Although it may take several hours for the bacteria to pass to the host, ticks should be removed as soon as possible, using either a pair of tweezers or a tick removal tool (obtainable from many pharmacies and veterinary surgeries).
- Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and then pull upwards firmly. The complete tick should be removed.
- No rotation is required and the tick should not be covered with creams and chemicals.



Further action

- Not all ticks carry diseases.
- If you develop a rash at the site of the tick bite, usually within 30 days after being bitten, contact your GP, and mention the tick bite.
- Even in absence of a rash, if you feel unwell, contact your GP and mention that you have been outdoors and that you may have been bitten by a tick. Lyme Disease can be treated using antibiotics.



Further information

- www.gov.uk - and search for 'tick bite risk'
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/Lyme-disease