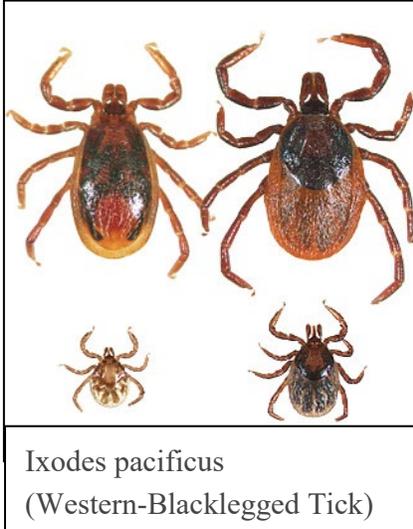


BE "TICK" AWARE

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Ixodes pacificus
(Western-Blacklegged Tick)

This last winter was relatively mild. With the recent rainfall, it is a recipe for an early and abundant tick season in Oregon. People have been calling me about ticks after finding them on themselves, children and pets. A representative of the Oregon Health Authority has been out doing surveillance work collecting ticks for disease testing around the state.

My colleague in Jackson County has been collecting ticks since February and has already isolated Lyme disease *Borrelia burgdorferi* in the tick *Ixodes pacificus* better known as the Western Black-Legged Tick or deer tick in that region. This species of tick is present in Western Oregon and along the Columbia River in lower elevations. It is believed that one to five percent of the Western Black-Legged Ticks actually carry the bacterium responsible for Lyme disease.

Here on the east side of Oregon, we predominately have *Dermacentor variabilis* better known as the American Dog Tick which can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted-Fever and Tularemia. They prefer to feed on dogs, rodents and other large animals, but will definitely find their way to a human host. Another rather nasty tick found in Eastern Oregon is the *Dermacenter andersoni* better known as the Rocky Mountain Wood Tick. This tick can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted-Fever, Colorado Tick Fever, Tick Relapsing Fever and Tularemia. Another rather nasty condition that these ticks can cause is Tick Paralysis where the host will actually "go down" and be paralyzed after this species of tick embeds itself into its host. It is vital that the tick be removed soon after this symptom happens or death could occur. If the tick is removed the host will generally recover within 24 to 72 hours.



Dermacentor variabilis
(American Dog ticks)

The main way to not have a tick encounter is to avoid them. That is not an option for most of us as outdoor enthusiasts. Remember that ticks in Oregon are active primarily in the spring and summer, but also can be found in the fall. Bear and Turkey hunters can come in contact with "seed" ticks which are virtually impossible to see unless you have a magnifying glass. Check yourself for ticks more than once, these ticks in the "seed" nymph stage can even embed themselves between you eyelashes and can go unnoticed. Deer hunters will most definitely find ticks on their recently harvested game. Beware after the animal has expired, the ticks will leave that host to seek another more suitable "live" host which will probably be you!

Things to remember when afield in tick country: Be careful when walking in thick vegetation, ticks usually "crest" on the uphill side of a trail, wear a heavy-duty repellent with DEET as the active ingredient and tuck your pant legs inside of your boots and wear a



Dermacentor andersoni
(Rocky Mountain Wood ticks)

hat.

While inspecting yourself for ticks what should you do if you find an embedded tick? If possible have someone else remove the tick from your body, use tweezers or forceps rather than fingers (I prefer the really pointed tipped ones), grasp the mouth parts or head of the tick as close to the skin as possible, gently pull the tick straight out, steadily and firmly. The mouth parts of a tick are barbed, so don't be alarmed if a little bit of it breaks off into your skin. Always wash your hands and use an antiseptic to the bite area.

As a precaution, if you experience any of these symptoms after a tick bite like fever, headaches, fatigue, joint pain or an unusual halo ring or red rash on your skin seek medical attention immediately.

Remember, heading out into tick country doesn't have to be scary, just use good precautionary measures and common sense when going afield.

Helpful References:

<http://www.tickencounter.org/tick>

<http://oregonvma.org/care-health/dogs/lyme-disease>

<http://www.koin.com/meet-the-team/eileen-park/846696164>

<http://today.oregonstate.edu/archives/2010/jun/tick-information-available-oregon-state-university>