



Ticks and Lyme borreliosis:

As we move into Spring and start to venture further a field into the country side it is time to consider protective measures against development of Lyme Disease.

This disease is transmitted by ticks that are infected with *Borrelia spirochaete* which then transmit the spirochete during their feeding process to humans and other animals potentially leading to development of Lyme Disease.

Tips to prevent against infection

- ◆ When out walking wear long trousers and tuck them into your socks
- ◆ If possible wear light coloured clothing, this makes ticks easier to see
- ◆ Walk in the centre of pathways away from the vegetation
- ◆ Use an insect repellent. One that contain DEET 25% can be sprayed directly on to the skin. Premethrin based ones can be sprayed directly onto clothing
- ◆ Strip down and check for ticks paying special attention to your hair, underarms, behind knees and groin
- ◆ To keep pets tick free use vet recommended treatments. Groom pets regularly particularly after walks through vegetation e.g. long grass, bracken.
- ◆ Carry a tick remover
- ◆ If your garden backs onto areas of countryside ensure fencing is robust enough to prevent deer from entering your garden

Tick Removal

Prompt removal of all ticks is recommended, though not all will carry infection.

- ◆ **Tweezers.** Use fine-tipped tweezers and grasp the tick as close as possible to the host's skin. Pull upwards with even steady pressure. Don't twist, as this may cause the tick to regurgitate and increase the risk of infection.
- ◆ **Tick removal tool.** There are various tools on the market, Tick Twister for example. When using this method, the tool is inserted from the side, lifted slightly, and rotated two or three times. Twisting is OK with this method as the tool doesn't exert pressure on the mouth parts or abdomen in the way that tweezers do.

After removing the tick, disinfect the bite site and wash hands.

- ◆ It is important to only use the above methods. Other methods such as applying petroleum jelly or burning the tick can lead to tick 'distress' causing it to regurgitate potentially increasing the risk of infection.

Further information can be obtained via <http://www.bada-uk.org/>

Lyme borreliosis symptoms:

This disease has different stages all of which will respond to antibiotics. The early stage and the most common is the development of a rash (erythema migrans) at the site of the tick bite.



This rash can appear 3-30 days later. Sometimes referred to as a bull's-eye rash.

Later stages of the disease can manifest as 'flu-like symptoms' with headache, joint pain and muscle aches. Further complications include Lyme arthritis, affecting mainly the knee joints and Neuroborreliosis, which can result in facial palsy, viral like meningitis, weakness or altered sensation of the limbs and trunk.

Further information on prevention, investigation and treatment of Lyme borreliosis can be found at: http://www.hpa.org.uk/webc/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1309968694565

Advice to pregnant women to avoid close contact with animals that are giving birth.

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and UK Departments of Health have re-issued annual advice that pregnant women who come into close contact with sheep during the lambing season may place their own health and that of their unborn child at risk from infections that can occur in some ewes.

However, it is important to be aware that the risks are not confined to spring time or just sheep. Cows and goats who have recently given birth can carry similar infections.

To avoid possible risk of infection pregnant women should be advised

- ◆ Not to assist lambing ewes, cows that are calving or nanny goats that are kidding
- ◆ Avoid contact with aborted or new-born lambs, calves or kids or with the afterbirth, birthing fluids or materials (e.g. bedding) that may be contaminated with birth products
- ◆ Avoid handling and washing clothing, boots or any materials that may have come into contact with animals that have recently given birth, their young or the afterbirths
- ◆ Ensure partners or household contacts attending animals giving birth take appropriate hygiene precautions including wearing personal protective equipment and adequate washing to remove potential contamination

Pregnant women should seek medical advice if they experience fever or flu like symptoms or if they are concerned that they could have acquired infection from a farm type environment.

Farmers have a responsibility to minimise risks to pregnant women. This included members of their own family, professional staff and the public visiting their farm.

Farmers should consult their veterinary surgeon about suitable vaccination programmes and any other disease control measures in sheep, cattle and goats. [Source: Defra News Release, 20 January 2012. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/news/2012/01/20/advice-to-pregnant-women-to-avoid-c...>]

Further information on the infection risks to pregnant women from cattle, sheep and goats that have given birth is available on the Defra website at: <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/zoonoses/lambing.htm>

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