

# TICKS IN MONTANA:

The most common tick we have here in Montana is the Rocky Mountain wood tick, *Dermacentor andersoni*. This is common throughout most Montana counties. We also have the American dog tick, *Dermacentor variabilis*, which can be found mostly in the eastern counties in Montana. We currently do not have either the black-legged tick, *Ixodes dammini*, (formerly the deer tick) or the western black-legged tick in Montana that transmit Lyme disease.

## Preventing or reducing ticks on you:

If you are out in an area with tall grass, shrubs, and woody ornamentals, you might encounter ticks. Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants and tuck your shirt in. Light colored clothing will help to spot ticks crawling on your clothing. Try to keep the ticks on the outside of your clothing to make them easier to see. Always do your tick checks right afterwards. Spraying the insect repellent DEET on your pant legs from your knees to your shoes will help prevent ticks from crawling on to you.

## Tick removal:

When removing ticks, you want to remove them as early as possible. There are some common “tick removal methods” that are not suitable anymore but have become somewhat folklore. The “backing out the tick with a match” technique is one of these “folklore” methods, and ticks do not detach this way. It is important to try to thoroughly remove the tick and to try to remove the mouthparts. The tick has a hypostome, which is barbed and used for insertion into the skin. If this breaks off, it can be a further source of irritation and possibly infection. Also, the crushing of the mouthparts can allow for disease transmission to occur through the skin if not removed properly.

Place forceps (try to use blunt curved forceps or tweezers) around the tick and as close to the skin as possible. Remove the tick with a steady pull away from the skin. Try not to jerk or twist the tick. Avoid getting or crushing any tick parts on you. Put it in a crush-proof container with rubbing alcohol to kill it, and send it to your extension agent or to the Schutter Diagnostic Lab ([diagnostics.montana.edu](http://diagnostics.montana.edu)) for identification. Disinfect your skin with alcohol and wash your hands with soap and water.

Please refer to the MSU Extension publications below from Dr. Greg Johnson, MSU Veterinary Entomologist, for further information.

[http://store.msuextension.org/Products/Ticks-of-Veterinary-and-Public-Health-Importance-in-Montana\\_EB0198.aspx](http://store.msuextension.org/Products/Ticks-of-Veterinary-and-Public-Health-Importance-in-Montana_EB0198.aspx)

[http://store.msuextension.org/Products/Ticks-on-Companion-Animals\\_MT201303AG.aspx](http://store.msuextension.org/Products/Ticks-on-Companion-Animals_MT201303AG.aspx)