

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Melissa Propp, RN at 308-345-4223 or email: nurse@swhealth.ne.gov

Third Confirmed Case of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever in Southwest Nebraska

A third case of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever have been confirmed in the Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department district which includes: Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties.

“A warm winter and wet spring has made ideal conditions for ticks,” shares Melissa Propp, SWNPHD Public Health Nurse. “We want residents to understand that infected ticks can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) and other diseases through their bite.”

RMSF can be severe or even fatal if not treated in the first few days of symptoms. So see your doctor immediately if you have been bitten by a tick and experience any of the following symptoms: fever, chills, headache, abdominal pain, vomiting, fatigue, or muscle pain.”

Center for Disease Control & Prevention recommends the best way to remove an attached tick is to:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible.
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts with tweezers.
3. If you are unable to remove the mouth easily with clean tweezers, leave it alone and let the skin heal.
4. After removing the tick, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub, or soap and water.
5. Dispose of a live tick by submersing it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape, or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.

“If you are in areas with the potential for ticks, we recommend that you bathe or shower as soon as possible after coming indoors,” explains Propp. “It will be easier to find and wash off ticks that are crawling before they attach.” Some suggestions from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Conduct a full-body tick check on yourself and children as soon as you can.
- Look closely under the arms, in and around the ears, inside the belly button, behind the knees, between the legs, around the waist and especially in their hair.
- Examine gear and pets. Ticks can ride into the home on clothing and pets, then attach to a person later.
- Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors. If clothes are damp, additional time may be needed.
- If clothes require washing first, hot water is recommended. Cold and medium temperature water will not kill ticks effectively.

- If clothes cannot be washed in hot water, tumble dry on low heat for 90 minutes or high heat for 60 minutes. Clothes should be warm and completely dry.

It is a good idea to take preventive measures against ticks year-round, but especially in warmer months when ticks are most active. Some suggestions include:

- Use repellents that contain 20-30% DEET on exposed skin and clothing for protection that lasts up to several hours.
- Parents should apply DEET products to their children, avoiding hands, eyes and mouth.
- Wear long pants and long sleeves.
- Use products that contain permethrin on clothing, gear, and tents.
- Walk in the center of trails.
- Avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- Mow lawns regularly, remove leaf litter/brush and prune low-lying bushes to let in more sunlight.
- Keep woodpiles in sunny areas off the ground.

For more information on tick driven diseases such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, ehrlichiosis, tularemia and Lyme disease contact SWNPHD by calling 308-345-4223 or email: nurse@swhealth.ne.gov. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street, McCook – one block north of Arby's. You can also follow us on Facebook.com/swnphd and Twitter@swpublichealth.

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