

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever Cases in Southwest Nebraska

Two cases 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.

“Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected tick,” shares Melissa Propp, SWNPHD Public Health Nurse. “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.”

Typical symptoms include: fever, chills, headache, abdominal pain, vomiting, fatigue, and muscle pain. A rash may also develop but is often absent in the first few days. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) about 10% of people with RMSF never develop a rash. Most often, the rash begins two to five days after the onset of fever as small, flat, pink, non-itchy spots on the wrists, forearms, and ankles and spreads to the trunk.

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.
- 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.

“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 instead of attached.” Some suggestions:

- 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 clothes in a dryer on high heat for an hour to kill remaining ticks.

For more information on Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, 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](https://www.facebook.com/swnphd) and [Twitter@swpublichealth](https://twitter.com/swpublichealth).

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