

Lyme disease not the only thing deer ticks cause

MINNEAPOLIS, 3:13 p.m. CST, May 8, 2007 -- While Lyme disease is still Minnesota's most commonly reported tick-borne disease, deer ticks are the cause of two other diseases as well: human anaplasmosis and babesiosis.

These diseases are less common than Lyme disease, a Minnesota Department of Health news release states, but they can still result in serious illness.

“We need Minnesotans to know that Lyme disease is not the only disease they can get from deer ticks,” said Melissa Kemperman, an epidemiologist at the MDH specializing in diseases carried by ticks and mosquitoes.

“The elderly or immune compromised are at particular risk for human anaplasmosis and babesiosis, which can result in hospitalization or even death.”

High numbers of all three diseases are being reported in Minnesota. In 2006, near-record totals of 914 Lyme disease cases and 177 human anaplasmosis cases were reported to MDH. Reports of babesiosis are more rare, but 2006 was still a record year, with 18 cases reported.

Deer ticks carry the bacteria that cause human anaplasmosis (HA), formerly called human granulocytic ehrlichiosis (HGE). Symptoms of HA include abrupt onset of a high fever (102 degrees or more), chills, severe headache, and muscle aches. These symptoms appear between 1 and 3 weeks after an infectious tick bite. In 2006, about 40 percent of Minnesota's human anaplasmosis cases were hospitalized for their infection. Untreated, HA can result in organ failure and death.

Deer ticks also carry a malaria-like parasite that causes babesiosis. Babesiosis is characterized by high fever, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, and loss of appetite. These symptoms usually appear 1-6 weeks after a deer tick bite, but may take longer in some individuals. Most people infected with the babesiosis parasite will have mild symptoms, or no symptoms at all. However, people who are immune compromised may develop severe illness. Babesiosis can be fatal. In the past five years, 3 reported babesiosis patients in Minnesota have died from their infection.

Related Information

[MDH: "Deer ticks pass more than Lyme disease, health officials warn"](#)



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