

Shenandoah

National Park
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior

TICKS

SNP-36



Shenandoah National Park is home to many types of wildlife - including some that might be considered "undesirable." Ticks easily fall into this category as they are parasitic, feeding on the blood of people and animals, and can carry diseases which are sometimes quite serious. Understanding ticks may help you avoid some unpleasantness and even illness during your visit to Shenandoah.

What Are TICKS?

Ticks are distant relatives to spiders. The type most often found in Shenandoah is the American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*) with a black or brown seed-like body and eight curved legs. The much smaller deer tick (*Ixodes dammini*) is on the increase in Virginia and may soon be found in Shenandoah N.P. as well. The female deer tick is about half the size of the dog tick and has a fringe of scarlet around its hind parts. The male is all black and even smaller. Both types of

ticks share a similar life cycle - they grow through four developmental stages and require a meal of blood for successful transition from each stage to the next. As larvae or nymphs, ticks will feed on small creatures such as mice or birds. It is in the adult stage that ticks seek out larger hosts including deer and people. Although adult ticks can live for years without feeding, the female must engorge herself with blood in order to lay eggs and begin the cycle again.

Are Ticks Dangerous?

Ticks can carry diseases and because of the ticks' intimate association with the bloodstream of animals and people, these diseases are easily transmitted. Each type of tick may carry a different disease.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER is transmitted by the dog tick.

Three to ten days after a bite from an infected tick, a fever will develop accompanied by achiness and sometimes chills. A measles-like rash, usually around the wrist and ankles will often develop after the fever.

LYME DISEASE is

transmitted by the deer tick.

An expanding red, ring-shaped rash may appear a few days to a few weeks after a bite from an infected tick. Flu-like symptoms including fever, achiness and general malaise often accompany the rash or can appear alone.

IF YOU DEVELOP ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS AFTER EXPOSURE TO TICKS IT IS IMPORTANT TO SEEK MEDICAL HELP. BE SURE TO TELL YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR RECENT EXPOSURE TO TICKS. THESE DISEASES CAN BE CURED AND NEED NOT BE SERIOUS IF THEY ARE TREATED EARLY.

**What Can I Do
To Reduce My Risk?**

Tick habitat includes grassy, brushy and woodland areas, so it is difficult to avoid ticks completely. There are precautions, though, that you can take: By tucking shirts into pants and pants into socks, you can minimize the opportunities for ticks to get under your clothing. Light colored clothing will also make it easier to see and remove ticks. Inspect yourself and your companions often while in tick country in order to catch ticks before they attach themselves for a meal. If you find a tick that is attached,

remove it. Cover the tick and the surrounding skin with rubbing alcohol. Using fine tweezers, grasp the tick as near to the attachment site as you can and gently pull it out. On rare occasions the mouth parts will remain in the skin. If this should happen, seek medical attention to remove those parts. Not many tick attachments result in the transmission of disease, but by being alert to your surroundings and aware of possible symptoms you can greatly reduce your chances of serious illness.