

Meadowlark District Extension News
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Ticks

Now that spring has sprung, everything is green and growing in many of our landscapes. It's been a welcome change for many after the long winter to finally see some green grass and bright colored flowers. Unfortunately, the good plant growth has led to an increase in tick numbers as well.

Ticks do best in environments where plants flourish. This is especially true when we have lots of grass and weeds in areas that receive less maintenance. In other words, if we aren't mowing an area or keeping the weeds at bay, ticks will likely thrive. That means that the first line of defense when it comes to fighting ticks is management of lawns and border areas to reduce the desirable environment that ticks like to live in.

What about insecticide applications? While acaricides can do a good job against ticks, it may not always be in your best interest to 'blanket apply' insecticides. K-State Research & Extension Entomologist Dr. Raymond Cloyd suggests some other control options as well.

Start by wearing a DEET or permethrin based repellent when outdoors. Numerous products are available. Remember: permethrin-based products must not be applied directly to the skin.

It might seem a little funny, but something as simple as tucking your pant legs in to your socks can even help. Wear white socks when possible – they make it easier to see ticks on them.

Once you've returned from an area where ticks might be a problem, closely inspect the skin of yourself and children. If ticks are found, remove them immediately. A shower would be a good idea as well.

Ticks found embedded in your skin should carefully be removed with tweezers, doing everything possible to include the tick's head. Pull slowly, and straight away from the skin, using slow, steady pressure. Do not twist or jerk as doing so can cause the head to become detached and left in the skin, providing an opportunity for infection.

Ticks should be saved in a vial with alcohol and labeled with the date found. If flu-like symptoms – including, headache, skin rash, and fever – occur in the 10 to 14 days after tick removal, see a physician immediately and take the tick as a reference. Embedded ticks should be identified, since they can harbor pathogens. You can do so by checking out K-State Research & Extension's Ticks in Kansas publication. It's available through your District Office or online at: <https://www.bookstore.ksre.k-state.edu/pubs/mf2653.pdf>.