



Raising Lyme Disease Awareness

By State Representative Rosemary M. Brown (R-Monroe/Pike)

May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month in Pennsylvania. As it is spring, and many of us are eager to be outdoors with family and friends, this is an important time to remember the dangers that deer ticks can carry. I have been hearing from many sources that this season could be a bad one for ticks, due to the mild winter we experienced, so I thought it would be helpful to share some information.

Deer ticks are the primary carrier of Lyme disease, which is a zoonotic disease – or transmissible between animals and humans. The Department of Environmental Protection released a study last year confirming a high risk of Lyme in every county of the Commonwealth, as deer ticks have been found in all 67 counties. Unfortunately, we lead the nation in confirmed cases of Lyme disease.

To prevent against Lyme, the Department of Health recommends using insect repellent and wearing long-sleeve shirts and long pants when venturing outdoors, along with checking for – and promptly and properly removing – any ticks when you return, and showering shortly after exposure.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state that some of the early signs (3-30 days after tick bite) include rash, fever, chills, headache, fatigue, muscle joint aches and swollen lymph nodes. Some of the late signs and symptoms (days to months after tick bite) include severe headaches and neck stiffness, facial palsy, heart palpitations, and intermittent pain in tendons.

House Bill 174 was approved by the House Health Committee in early May to help ensure patients have access to emerging diagnostic and treatment options for Lyme disease. It would require health insurers to cover treatment plans for Lyme disease or related tick-borne illnesses as prescribed by a health care practitioner.

The Lyme Disease Task Force was created by the Legislature in June 2014, and is charged with providing the public with information and education to create greater awareness of the dangers of and measures available to prevent, diagnose and treat Lyme disease and related maladies. The task force is comprised of 22 individuals from varying areas of interest including a representative of the NE DNA laboratory at East Stroudsburg University and Pike County resident expert Dr. Robert Ollar.

For more information about Lyme disease in Pennsylvania, visit www.health.pa.gov and search for Lyme disease.

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