

# Orange County Vector Control District

*For Immediate Release*

*Tuesday, April 26, 2011*



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## Seasonal Tick Warning: Orange County Vector Control District warns of increased tick activity in Orange County.

Orange County Vector Control District (District) advises residents of Orange County to increase their awareness of ticks and tick-borne disease this spring.

Record rainfall has contributed to an abundance of vegetation (harborage) and food sources (attractants) that favor tick breeding throughout Orange County. Ticks are blood feeding parasites, which attach to birds, reptiles, and mammals using complex piercing mouthparts. While attached to an animal, ticks suck blood for several days and drop off after they have completed their blood-meal.

The increase in tick populations can threaten human and animal health. Ticks transmit a wide range of diseases and bacteria; of particular concern is Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF). RMSF is transmitted by ticks found in a variety of public or private urban and rural habitats. The symptoms of RMSF include severe headache, high fever, and a blotchy rash on the wrists or ankles. RMSF is rarely fatal if treatment is sought in the early stages.

People and animals usually encounter ticks while engaged in outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, or hunting. Ticks live on or near the ground and often climb onto tall grass or plants, in order to snag onto a passing animal. Dogs can carry ticks into the home where they can lay their eggs and begin the cycle of infestation. Check dogs and other pets for ticks regularly to reduce the possibility of infestation. If ticks are found within the home, contact the District for recommendations on how to eliminate the threat. The District encourages residents to submit ticks for identification. While the ticks will not be tested for the presence of disease, they will be identified to species.

To help reduce exposure to ticks and the diseases they carry when outdoors, residents are advised to follow a few simple steps.

- Check regularly (at least once an hour) for ticks when entering areas that are likely infested with them.
- Wear light colored clothing so ticks can be easily spotted and removed before they become embedded in the skin.

- Wear long pants and long-sleeved clothing.
- Tuck shirt into pants and pants into socks or boots.
- Choose wide trails and walk in the center. Avoid brushy and grassy areas.
- Use approved repellents around shoes, ankles and on exposed skin. Be sure to follow the directions on the label carefully.

If a tick is found embedded in the skin always use fine tipped tweezers to grab the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull the tick firmly, straight out, away from the skin (do not twist or attempt to burn the tick). Wash your hands and site of the bite with soap and water after the tick is removed. Apply an antiseptic to help prevent infection from bacteria found in the tick mouth. See your doctor if a rash or flu-like symptoms develop within 30 days after the bite.

Contact the District for further information:

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