

July 2012

Getting “Ticked Off”?

Aren't we all? Ticks are a huge problem, and for those of us who really are not comfortable with the insecticide spray approach, I hope this will help.

First – even though I personally absolutely **hate** using “bug spray”, I do recommend using a DEET spray on shoes, pants and long-sleeved cover-ups. You don't need a lot of it, and don't spray it on your skin, around children and pets where they will breathe it in, or lick it. Pets may lick the floor (or your boots) and the hand-to-mouth reflex for young children is something to be very careful about.

Second – A little (I promise short) bit about ticks. You will see them all year. They are not common when we have snow, but they are out there. They especially like damp weather, grasses and shrubs. Anywhere you think a deer, rabbits, or mice might browse you will find ticks. So far, deer ticks are the only ones known to carry Lyme Disease, but other ticks carry other illnesses, so don't ignore them. If you would like more information the CDC site is excellent. (<http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/diseases>) Here is a very clever, low-cost, TARGETED and very effective way to help lower the tick population.

One of the most common hosts to the deer tick is our white-footed mouse (what we usually refer to as a field mouse or deer mouse). Get a 12-inch piece of 3/4-inch pvc pipe (that's the black plastic plumbing pipe easily found at a local hardware store), a bag of plain cotton balls, a container of flea powder (not spray or liquid), a gallon-size zip lock bag, and a pair of disposable gloves. Fill the zip lock bag ½ full of the cotton balls. PUT ON THE DISPOSABLE GLOVES. Shake a decent amount of flea powder into the bag, seal it, and shake; distributing the powder throughout the cotton balls. Now, WHILE STILL WEARING THE GLOVES, stuff the coated cotton balls into the pvc tube. Take the tube and put it where it is likely to be found by mice, but will not be accessible to pets and/or children. Under the porch, outside steps, tree branch crotches, etc. Take off the disposable gloves, but them in the plastic bag, seal it and put it in the trash. The mice will take the cotton balls back to their nests, the flea powder will kill the tick nymphs but not hurt the mice (I leave that job to the snakes and my cats). You will find this VERY effective, low cost and easy to maintain. As you know, mice reproduce at a fantastic rate, so check the tube every week and refill as necessary.

West Nile Virus – You may have heard that mosquitoes in Pittsfield have tested positive for WNV. Where this is absolutely true, the sample was extremely small and it has not – to date – been documented anywhere south of Pittsfield. This does not mean that WNV is not around, that is highly unlikely. At this point in time, however, it does not appear to pose a threat to the human population. If you find birds that have not died from injury, DO NOT touch them without disposable gloves. I would appreciate a call (528-1798) to let me know. Health Agents are keeping records in their towns for DPH. The Commonwealth will not test for WNV (we already know it is in the County, so it is a moot point), so the carcass may be buried. If you do not wish to dispose of the carcass, call me and I will take care of it.

Have a great summer, don't forget sunscreen. It is vitally important.

Questions? Suggestions? Email me at ellielovejoy@townofmtwashington.com or call me at 413 528-1798.