

Reduce the risk of Lyme Disease ? keep deer out of your yard

Colder weather's arrival means homeowners across the country brace themselves for the battle against bold, foraging deer. But with recent reports that Lyme disease ? transmitted by ticks that live on deer ? is even more prevalent than health officials once thought, keeping deer away from your backyard is not just a cosmetic or financial issue any more. Your success at deterring deer could directly affect your family's health.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently estimated about 300,000 cases of Lyme disease are diagnosed each year. Only about 30,000 of those actually get reported to the CDC. Many more likely go undiagnosed since Lyme symptoms can mimic other ailments and even disappear altogether for a time. Lyme disease is now the most common tick-borne illness, according to the CDC, and its health consequences can be severe.

Lyme disease is named for the river-side Connecticut town where it first emerged in 1977. A number of children in the area began exhibiting arthritis-like symptoms, a hallmark of the disease. A bull's-eye target-shaped rash at the bite location may be the first indication that a person was bitten by a tick carrying Lyme disease, but not everyone will see or develop the rash. Symptoms such as joint pain, headaches, neck stiffness and heartbeat irregularities may get mistaken for flu or other illnesses.

In the northeast, mid-Atlantic and north-central states, deer ticks carry the disease. On the Pacific Coast, blacklegged ticks (who also like traveling on deer) spread Lyme disease, the CDC says.

Year-round, especially during fall and winter, you should check your own body, children and pets for ticks. Deer ticks are often so small you won't even feel their bite, so visual inspection is important. If you suspect you've been bitten, talk to your doctor right away.

The CDC says that reducing your exposure to ticks is the best defense against contracting Lyme disease. While you can't vaccinate your family against Lyme disease (the vaccine maker stopped production in 2002, citing lack of consumer demand), you can ?vaccinate? your backyard against deer that carry Lyme-bearing ticks. Keeping deer away from your backyard can help reduce your chances of encountering ticks in your home environment.

Look for a proven effective, natural deterrent that has been independently tested, like Bobbex Deer Repellent. The topical foliar spray uses taste and smell aversion ingredients to deter deer, moose and elk from browsing and causing other damage to ornamental plantings, shrubs and trees. Safe for use on even the most sensitive plantings, as well as around children and pets, Bobbex works in any climate and will not wash off after heavy rain or snow. The Connecticut Department of Forestry and Horticulture tested Bobbex Deer Repellent against 10 top competitors and found it to be 93 percent effective, second only to a physical barrier, such as a fence, in keeping deer away. To learn more, visit www.bobbex.com

As part of your deer and Lyme prevention efforts, keep these facts in mind:

? Prevention is easier than cure ? in both cases. Even after treatment with antibiotics, 10 to 20 percent of Lyme patients have symptoms that last for months or even years, the CDC reports. Once deer move into your yard, they can be difficult to evict, and they can cause hundreds of dollars in damage. It's easier to keep deer away ? and avoid Lyme altogether ? than to rectify the problems created by deer and the ticks they carry.

? A single whitetail deer can consume 8 to 12 pounds of foliage a day.

? Home remedies rarely work for keeping deer away, and trying to treat Lyme on your own can have severe health consequences. Untreated Lyme disease can cause arthritis, severe joint pain and swelling, and even chronic neurological problems such as numbness, tingling in the hands or feet and short-term memory problems, the CDC says.

? Even though many plants, bushes and trees will lose their leaves during fall and winter, it's important to continue applying deer

repellents year-round. Remember, deer forage aggressively when food becomes scarce, fall and winter are the times when they're most likely to enter your yard ? bringing their disease-carrying cargo with them while ravaging your foliage, trees and shrubs.

For more information on repelling deer, visit www.bobbex.com