

Be mindful of ticks in Colorado

Tick borne illnesses can prompt trouble for those infected



**Tips
from the Posse**

By Mark Rackay

Every spring, my grandmother would drag me off, with me kicking and fighting all the way, to the doctor in town for my annual “tick fever shot.” I liked shots about as much as I liked school — not at all. It was an argument that I should have just realized it was useless to rebel against, because that strong-willed old woman was going to get her way.

Apparently, a relative of hers got a case of Rocky Mountain spotted fever from a tick. It happened long before I was born, so I only heard the story from her. This young lady came down with the fever and fought it for several weeks before she took a turn for the worse.

They hospitalized the young lady but the antibiotics available were not strong enough as they waited too long. After three days in the hospital, the lady took the last train west as the rare disease claimed another victim.

With all the perils I have faced living an outdoor life and that of a first responder, it would be just my luck to have a tiny little tick do me in. Good old Mr. Murphy, of Murphy’s Law fame, has chased me for many years. Admittedly, he has got hold of me on several occasions but has yet to do me in. Ticks really are something we should pay attention to, for our pets and us.

Last year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that between 2004 and 2016, tick-borne illnesses in humans more than doubled in the United States. In recent research, scientists have discovered seven new pathogens transmitted by the bloodsucking pests, as if we did not have enough illnesses already.

Colorado is home to more than 30 species of ticks, the Rocky Mountain wood tick and the American dog tick being the most common found here. As small as they are, it is very difficult to tell them apart. For the most part, I will leave identification to the experts. Certain species carry specific diseases, so if an illness is detected, identification can be important.

Tick season in Colorado starts in March and runs through June and sometimes later. Most ticks occur in elevations between 4,000 and 10,000 feet. With the increase of people living here and recreating in the great outdoors, it is logical that we will have an increase in tick-borne illnesses.

Ticks have large round bodies and small appendages. The mature tick can be as small as a pinhead or as large as a pencil eraser. A tick can sense carbon dioxide exhalation from mammals, often waiting on top of vegetation to hop on a passerby. They are especially found in brushy areas, edges of fields and woodlands, or on trails through grassy areas.

A tick will jump on you and imbed itself into the skin. It will then gorge itself on blood and stay



Here is a close-up of wood ticks on a deer. There were 50 or more ticks on this particular deer. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

there until he is removed. The mouth is barbed so improper removal can cause the head to remain in the skin and leave you with an infection.

Ticks can become infected with a disease when they feed on a mammal that has a disease circulating in its bloodstream. Small rodents such as squirrels, chipmunks and mice, can carry a disease but larger mammals such as deer can also be carriers. Once a tick becomes infected, it can pass the virus to humans.

According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, you cannot get Lyme disease from Colorado ticks. There are however, several diseases you can get from them.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia, tick-borne relapsing fever, Colorado tick fever and a condition known as tick paralysis are just a few of the sicknesses that await you should you get bit by a tick. And we thought all we had to worry about was mosquitoes and the West Nile they bring around.

Colorado tick fever is the most common tick-borne disease in Colorado, with an estimated 10,000 cases annually in the United States. The Rocky Mountain wood tick spreads this disease. It is a viral illness that can include symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, nausea and abdominal pain.

The symptoms usually last four to five days, followed by an apparent recovery, then a relapse of symptoms for several more days. The disease is not life-threatening and a complete recovery usually takes two to three weeks. The good news is that you will then have a lifelong immunity to the disease.

A far more serious disease transmitted by ticks is Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which is carried by the Rocky Mountain wood tick and the American dog tick. This disease is fairly rare in Colorado with only a couple cases reported annually.

The initial symptoms may seem flu-like. There may be high fever, headache, chills and muscle aches. A rash may appear a few days later and can spread rapidly over the entire body. This rash can even be seen on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet.

Immediate medical attention is important because Rocky Mountain spotted fever can be fatal. Fortunately, the illness can be cured with antibiotics.

The key to preventing tick diseases is to be on the offensive. Examine yourself and your dogs as soon as possible when returning home, and for longer times outdoors, several times during the day. If you get the tick out within three hours, most often he cannot transmit the diseases.

Ticks should be removed promptly when found. Wear protective gloves and use a fine pair of tweezers placed as close to the skin as possible. Remove with a steady but gentle traction, being careful not to crush the tick or leave its mouthparts in the skin. Once removed, wash your hands and the bite area very well with soap and water.

A match or a flame should never be used to remove a tick. This method can cause a tick to regurgitate, expelling any disease it might be carrying back into the bite wound. It is a good idea to save the tick in the freezer for identification later, in the event you become ill.

Here are a few things that may help when you are outdoors:

- Avoid tick-infested areas during the warmer months
- Wear light colored clothing so ticks can be spotted easily
- Wear long sleeves, a hat, and long pants with pant legs tucked into socks
- Walk in the center of trails, avoiding overhanging brush
- Use insect repellents containing DEET on skin
- Using permethrin on clothing can also help

I think my grandmother enjoyed dragging me down to the doc’s office for shots, sort of a revenge for my behavior. They no longer offer the vaccination for Rocky Mountain spotted fever because they found out it was ineffective against the disease. I tried telling her that all along but she wouldn’t listen.

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‘We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.’ — Abraham Lincoln. (Linda McIntosh/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

Why roses are what your garden’s missing

A variety of roses adds to the intrigue

I had a request to write an article about roses, and since they do so well in our area and they’re such a great addition to the garden, I had to jump on that. I’ve been told that the colors of the roses grown here are exceptional because of our high altitude and sunshine. They also get very few leaf spot problems because of the arid climate.

I know roses are often considered the prima donnas of the garden, but fresh cut roses in the house and the interest they create in the landscape may make any extra care worth the effort. To many people, deadheading roses or giving the plant a little extra attention is pure enjoyment.

Aphids are a common problem on roses but can easily be controlled; sometimes by simply washing them off with a strong stream of water. So don’t let that stop you from growing roses.

Thrips, which tend to be more prevalent on lighter colored roses, can also be easily controlled with organic or inorganic sprays. Spider mites are brought on by drought conditions, so regular watering will deter this insect.

A systemic insecticide with fertilizer applied around the base of the plant in the spring may alleviate a lot of the insect problems the roses experience. This is available at almost all garden centers.

Leaf cutter bees often damage rose leaves by cutting small semicircles out of the side of the leaf. Because the bees are such beneficial insects for pollinating (especially alfalfa) they’re actually a welcome addition to the garden. So don’t worry about a little damage on the leaf.

Stem cane borers can be a more significant insect problem but can be dealt with. These insects damage the rose plant by killing the cane. A little inconspicuous female black and yellow wasp inserts eggs into the bark at the tip of a freshly cut cane. After the eggs hatch, they turn into caterpillars and bore into the pith of the cane. They feed for about two weeks on aphids brought to the nest by the female wasp.

Within a couple of weeks the caterpillars will turn into an adult wasp and leave the cane. They also leave behind a hollow stem where they spent their life. The cane should be pruned off below the darkened hollowed damage. Placing a drop of glue onto the cut end of the cane when you’re pruning will prevent these borers from damaging



**Gardening
A to Z**

By Linda Corwine McIntosh

your roses. A small tube of Elmer’s School Glue works great for this and fits easily into your pocket for easy access. Don’t worry about applying glue to canes a quarter-inch in diameter or smaller.

I think the biggest problem with growing roses in our area is the fact that deer love them. They really do think roses are candy and they will invite all of their friends to your house for the “rose candy party.” Without fencing the deer out, growing can be challenging if you’re someone who shares your landscape with them.

I know a lot of people like to prune their roses very short in the fall for a neat, tidy appearance, but this can cause the plant to dehydrate and “winter kill” more easily. Wait until warmer weather in the spring to prune.

Lets clear up any confusion you may have about the varieties of roses. I think that hybrid tea roses are probably, hands down, the most popular garden rose. Maybe that’s because they usually produce one fantastic large bloom on a long stem. These are the kind of rose that you buy when you want the perfect long stem rose to give to someone. True, they can be a little bit more maintenance than other types of roses, but many people, including me, think they’re worth it.

With that said, don’t shy away from grandiflora roses. A lot of gardeners say this rose is the perfect replacement for higher maintenance hybrid teas. These are a cross between hybrid teas and floribundas. They tend to have fewer blooms than floribundas but will bloom all summer long. Their flowers and plant size is similar to floribundas with blossoms growing in clusters.

Floribundas are somewhat harder than gran-

difloras or hybrid teas. These roses are a cross between grandiflora and hybrid teas, and similar to grandifloras with blossoms growing in clusters. They’re similar in size to the hybrid teas but usually have slightly smaller blooms. They’re great flowers though, blooming intermittently summer through fall.

Miniatures are naturally dwarf roses and are great for small garden spaces. I think they’re great because they require very little pruning. Their mature size can range in height from 5 to 36 inches high, so be sure to read the tag to know what you’re getting when you buy one. Some people grow the very small varieties indoors in bright sunlight with good success.

Hybrid rugosa roses are known for their fragrance, hardiness and sturdiness in the garden. You can usually identify these roses by their numerous thorns and dark green leaves with deep veining. The hips, left from spent blooms, are often showy in winter. However, these roses don’t do well in poor soils and drought conditions.

There are a number of climber roses with large flowers that bloom repeatedly. Most of these roses do very well here. The varieties that bloom on old wood often will winter-kill and are not recommended for our area, so once again, know what you are buying.

Here’s a fall rose care tip. Water your roses well before you stop your regular irrigation. A few days before the cold weather sets in (and when daytime temperatures are above freezing), deep water your roses again.

There’s so much more to growing roses that I wish I could tell you about. Luckily, the Montrose Botanical Society is going to have a very special speaker, Matt Douglas, from High Country Roses speaking at the Montrose Botanic Gardens on Saturday morning, July 24 at 9 a.m. (Bring a lawn chair.) You won’t want to miss him if you’re interested in growing roses.

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