



# News Release

**For immediate release:** March 13, 2015

(15-036)

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## **Spring is around the corner and so are the ticks**

*A new online survey asks Washington's dog owners about their run-ins with ticks*

**OLYMPIA** — State health officials are asking Washington's dog owners, "Where'd you get that tick?"

A new online survey aims to help the state Department of Health learn more about [Washington ticks and the diseases they spread](#). Dog owners are asked to go online and fill out a short, anonymous survey, and to send the agency any ticks they find during tick season.

In Washington, taking the dog for a late winter or spring-time walk comes with the added task of checking our four-legged friends for ticks. The tick season has begun in Western Washington, and in the next few weeks, ticks will emerge from their winter hideaways elsewhere in the state.

"Many dog owners have found a tick or two on their furry friend after coming home from a walk outside," said Dr. Liz Dykstra, entomologist for the Department of Health. "We'd like to know more about when and where they've picked up ticks, and if their dog has ever been diagnosed with a tick-borne disease."

Ticks are typically considered a nuisance pest in the Pacific Northwest, but occasionally they transmit diseases to dogs and people here. Because companion animals like cats and dogs can get some of the same diseases as humans, state public health tracks animal diseases. By doing this, disease investigators gather information about potential disease risks to humans.

Every year, small numbers of tick-borne disease cases in people – such as Lyme disease – are reported to local health agencies and the state Department of Health. Many of these cases were infected during travel to eastern or Midwestern states, but a few people likely picked up their infection in Washington. Of the nearly 70 reported Lyme disease cases from 2010 to 2013, only about 15 percent were likely infected within the state.

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Preventing tick bites is the best way to avoid contracting a tick-borne illness such as Lyme disease. Wear light colored clothes that will let you easily spot a tick; tuck your pants into socks or boots and tuck in your shirt to keep ticks off. Using a repellent that has DEET on exposed skin can ward off the ticks. Any spray with permethrin can be used on clothes to kill ticks.

Be sure to take a shower within two hours of being in tick habitat and check yourself and your pet for ticks for a few days afterwards. If you've been bitten by a tick, make a note of the date and monitor your health for the next 30 days. If you develop an expanding "bull's-eye" rash, a spotty rash, or "flu-like" symptoms like fever, fatigue, or achiness within a month of spending time in tick habitat or a known tick bite, see your health care provider and let them know of your exposure.

The survey and tick submission requests are part of a multi-year project the Department of Health is doing to better understand tick-borne disease risks in our state. [Directions on how to submit ticks](#) and information about [ticks and tick-borne diseases](#) in Washington can be found online.

The [Department of Health website](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov](http://www.doh.wa.gov)) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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