



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH  
LANSING

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

JANET OLSZEWSKI  
DIRECTOR

November 5, 2007

To: Communicable Disease and Environmental Health staff and MDSS users at Michigan Local Health Departments; MDSS Administrators; Regional Epidemiologists

From: Pamela Roy, Wildlife Disease Biologist, Communicable Disease Division

Re: Guidelines for entering tick specimen information into the MDSS

We have known Lyme disease to be endemic to Menominee County, Michigan for over 20 years. Only recently have we seen evidence that Menominee County is perhaps not the only endemic county in the state. In order to get a full understanding of the state of Lyme disease and its ecology, it is necessary for us to collect all the information we can regarding cases, instances of the blacklegged tick (formerly called the deer tick) on people and dogs, and travel histories of people reporting illness or tick occurrences.

Therefore, although we do not consider a tick collected off a dog or person, (whether positive or negative for the Lyme disease pathogen) a case of Lyme disease, it is still important to have this information in order to gain a full understanding of the scope of Lyme disease in our state. Scientists from MDCH and MSU are conducting ongoing research in order to locate the areas where these tick and pathogen populations are present, and MDCH epidemiologists are keeping track of all the cases reported in the state.

Local health departments can be of assistance when receiving these 'tick identification' reports for the blacklegged ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*) on the MDSS by following up with the person or pet owner in order to obtain a travel history and an idea of where they may have picked up the tick. Further, whether the tick is positive or negative for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, there may still be a risk of Lyme disease in the area the tick was from. Therefore, it would be prudent at the time of interview to give information regarding Lyme disease and its prevention the way you would for a potential human case.

In order for MDCH to record these instances of tick identifications from dogs and humans, it would be most helpful to complete the following steps after the report is entered into the MDSS:

1. Contact the person or animal owner identified in the report to collect travel / exposure information and offer information on Lyme disease prevention. Travel / exposure information should be recorded in the HTML notes section.
2. After the the travel / exposure information is entered into the MDSS record, LHD staff should close the case as 'Lyme Disease', 'Not a case' and 'Completed.' (*Please note that a positive tick on a person is not the same as a confirmed case of Lyme disease.*)
3. If no travel / exposure history is noted in a 'Completed' case in the MDSS, MDCH staff may ask permission of the LHD to make contact with the person / owner to obtain this information.



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If you have any questions regarding Lyme disease or the blacklegged ticks (*I. scapularis*), or would like to notify MDCH of any reports of these ticks in your area, please feel free to contact Pamela Roy at [roy@mi.gov](mailto:roy@mi.gov) or 517-335-9655. As a reminder, ticks can be sent in for identification and testing to MDA or the MDCH lab. The online PDF for the MDA submission form can be found here: [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/01TICK\\_35363\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/01TICK_35363_7.pdf)

Cc: Mary Grace Stobierski  
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