

Sent via email: hsander@townshipofsevern.com

November 7, 2018

W. Henry Sander
Chief Administrative Officer
Township of Severn
1024 Hurlwood Lane, P.O. Box 159
Orillia, ON L3V 6J3

Dear Mr. Sander:

Re: Lyme Disease Surveillance 2018

As part of vector borne disease surveillance activities at the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU), staff have undertaken both passive and active surveillance activities to better understand the risk of encountering blacklegged ticks, a known vector of *Borrelia burgdorferi* – the bacteria responsible for Lyme disease, within Simcoe Muskoka.

Active tick surveillance involves dragging a cloth through brushy, wooded areas to assess the establishment of blacklegged tick populations and to determine Lyme disease risk in a community. This occurs twice annually in the spring and fall as ticks are more active during this time. In comparison, passive tick surveillance relies on residents submitting ticks to our local health unit offices. Staff will send the ticks for identification and bacterial testing to determine if the ticks are blacklegged and if they are carrying the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria.

In 2018, the Amos Tract in Oro-Medonte was selected as a site to conduct active surveillance. Criteria used to select this location included a review of historical tick submission data and bacterial testing results, consideration of local geography and presence of tick habitat. During this process, SMDHU staff also consulted with the County of Simcoe Forestry Department and technical experts from Public Health Ontario (PHO).

Following the results of our spring and fall dragging activities, a new estimated risk area will be identified within Simcoe County. This new estimated risk area is the second identified in Simcoe County and will include the township of Oro-Medonte and City of Orillia as well as parts of the City of Barrie, Tiny, Tay, Springwater and Severn townships. The first area was identified in fall of 2017 and included Awenda Provincial Park and surrounding communities. An estimated risk area is calculated from the location where blacklegged ticks are found and includes communities within a 20 kilometer radius from that location. It is anticipated this new area will be included in **Public Health Ontario's: Ontario Lyme Disease Map – Estimated Risk Areas in 2019**. You are receiving this letter because your municipality falls within the above mentioned 20 kilometer radius.

☐ **Barrie:**
15 Sperling Drive
Barrie, ON
L4M 6K9
705-721-7520
FAX: 705-721-1495

☐ **Collingwood:**
280 Pretty River Pkwy.
Collingwood, ON
L9Y 4J5
705-445-0804
FAX: 705-445-6498

☐ **Cookstown:**
2-25 King Street S.
Cookstown, ON
L0L 1L0
705-458-1103
FAX: 705-458-0105

☐ **Gravenhurst:**
2-5 Pineridge Gate
Gravenhurst, ON
P1P 1Z3
705-684-9090
FAX: 705-684-9887

☐ **Huntsville:**
34 Chaffey St.
Huntsville, ON
P1H 1K1
705-789-8813
FAX: 705-789-7245

☐ **Midland:**
B-865 Hugel Ave.
Midland, ON
L4R 1X8
705-526-9324
FAX: 705-526-1513

☐ **Orillia:**
120-169 Front St. S.
Orillia, ON
L3V 4S8
705-325-9565
FAX: 705-325-2091

SMDHU will continue to educate its residents regarding the risk of encountering blacklegged ticks within Simcoe Muskoka. Accordingly, we have attached the [media release](#) that was sent out on November 1, 2018. Although your community is included within the estimated risk area and this media release, it is possible to encounter ticks anywhere throughout Simcoe Muskoka.

The results of our active surveillance remind us of the importance of reducing our risk of Lyme disease by protecting ourselves against tick bites while enjoying the outdoors.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 1-877-721-7520 Ext. 7219 or by email at Charles.Gardner@smdhu.org.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

Charles Gardner, MD, CCFP, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

CG:LH:cm

Att. (1)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday November 1, 2018

Media Coordinator
705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520

John Challis (x 7239)
Kathy Dermott (x 7864)

Blacklegged Ticks Identified in Simcoe County

Public Health Ontario's Lyme Disease Map, which outlines estimated risk areas where blacklegged ticks have been found, is anticipated to include a second area within Simcoe Muskoka next year.

During the spring and fall of this year, tick dragging was conducted along the Amos Tract in Oro-Medonte and blacklegged ticks were identified in both seasons. Repeated occurrences of the species indicates they may be establishing in the area, and as a result, the potential risk of the ticks carrying the bacteria responsible for Lyme disease may also be increasing.

Blacklegged ticks can carry and transmit *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the bacteria responsible for causing Lyme disease.

Although it is not known if the ticks found in estimated risk areas carry Lyme disease, it is important for people spending time in wooded or grassy areas to be aware of this and take appropriate precautions.

Estimated risk areas are identified through active surveillance, otherwise known as "tick dragging." These areas are calculated from the location where blacklegged ticks are found and include communities within a 20-kilometre radius surrounding that location. This year, the township of Oro-Medonte, City of Orillia as well as parts of the City of Barrie, Tiny, Tay, Springwater and Severn townships will be included within this estimated risk area.

In fall of 2017, Awenda Provincial Park and surrounding communities were identified as an estimated risk area and were included in Public Health Ontario's Risk Map in 2018.

"Because of the numbers of ticks submitted in the past by individuals in the community, tick dragging was conducted along the Amos Tract because we wanted to better understand the potential exposure risks the public may have to blacklegged ticks in this area of Simcoe County," said Dr. Charles Gardner, Medical Officer of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit.

"Although ticks tend to be more active during the spring and summer, they can also be active in late fall and early winter when temperatures rise above freezing," said Dr. Gardner. For this reason, people should continue to exercise caution when they're out in wooded or grassy areas. Proper personal protection is key.

Ticks can be found in wooded areas with long grasses and leaf litter. The following is recommended to protect against being bitten by ticks when spending time in wooded or grassy areas.

- Wear light coloured pants, long sleeved tops, closed footwear and tuck your pants into your socks.
- Use an insect repellent containing DEET or icaridin.
- After being in such areas, search your body for ticks, especially the groin, scalp, back and underarm areas and quickly remove attached ticks.
- Shower within two hours after being in such areas.
- Check your pets for ticks after they have been in such areas as they may carry ticks into your home after you have been outdoors.

“We anticipate that the habitat for blacklegged ticks will spread over time due to our climate becoming more suitable to support the establishment of ticks in our area.” Dr. Gardner added. “Finding ticks in this area serves as a reminder that blacklegged ticks are present in Simcoe Muskoka and that people should take precautions to protect themselves against being bitten by ticks.”

In Ontario, only the blacklegged tick can transmit the bacteria responsible for causing Lyme disease. Not all blacklegged ticks are infected with the Lyme disease causing bacteria, so not all tick bites will spread Lyme disease. If a tick is infected, it needs to be attached to you for at least 24 hours to cause Lyme disease. Prompt removal of ticks is important to reduce your risk.

For more information on Lyme disease and the ticks that carry it, visit the health unit’s website at www.smhdu.org, or call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.