ALL ABOUT BLACK-LEGGED (DEER) TICKS

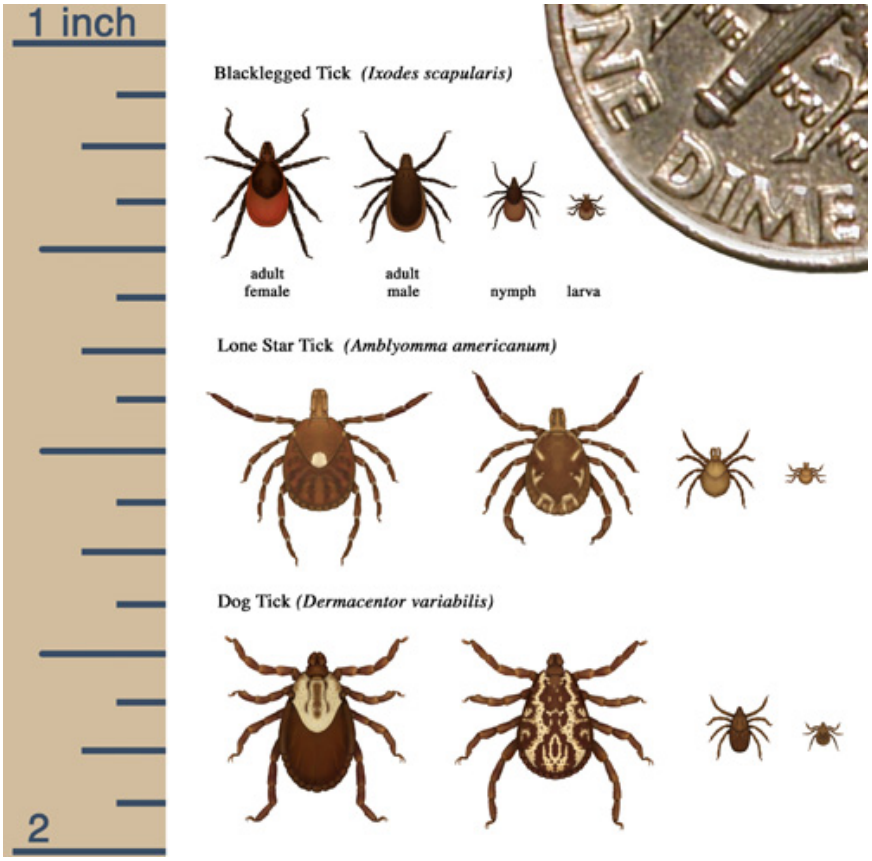
How to Identify Deer Ticks

Our region has about a dozen types of ticks, but Lyme Disease is spread only by deer ticks.

Shown here are female **deer ticks**, also called a **black-legged tick** (*Ixodes scapularis*). The black legs help to distinguish it from other common ticks. The rear red pouch will swell when the tick fills with blood. This tick is about 1/8" long.

Adults are more easily detected than the smaller nymphs.

The larvae are the size of a "▪" (period), nymphs size of poppy seed and adult, the size of a sesame seed.

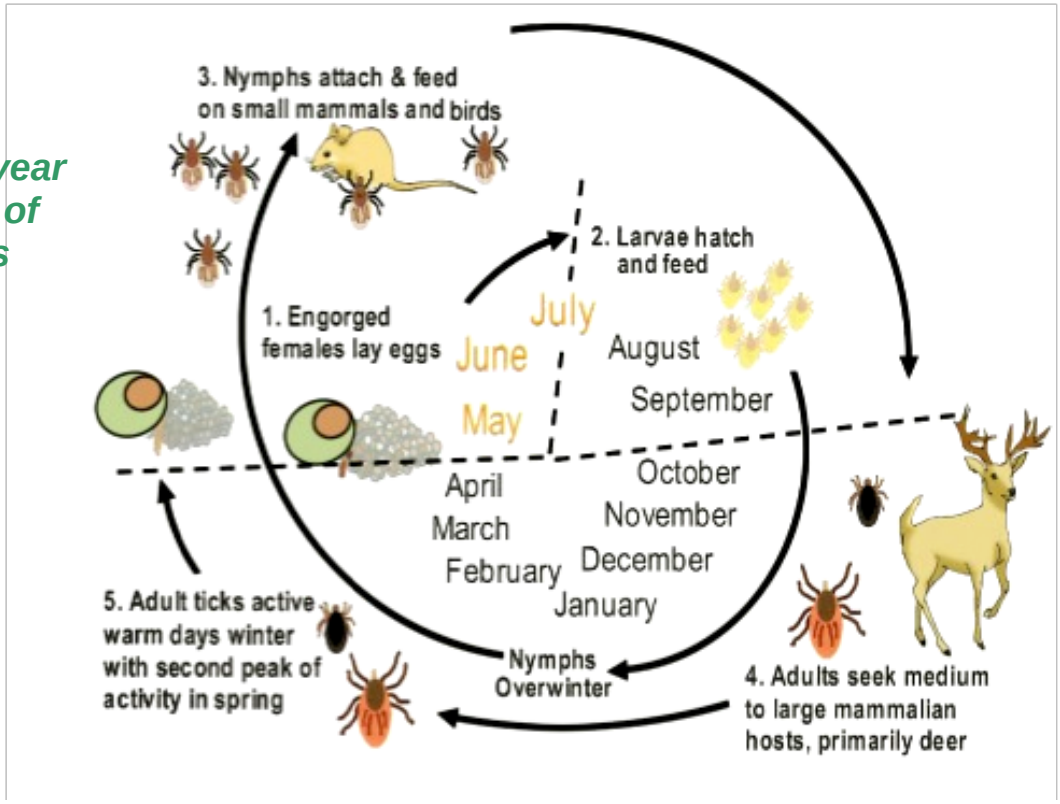


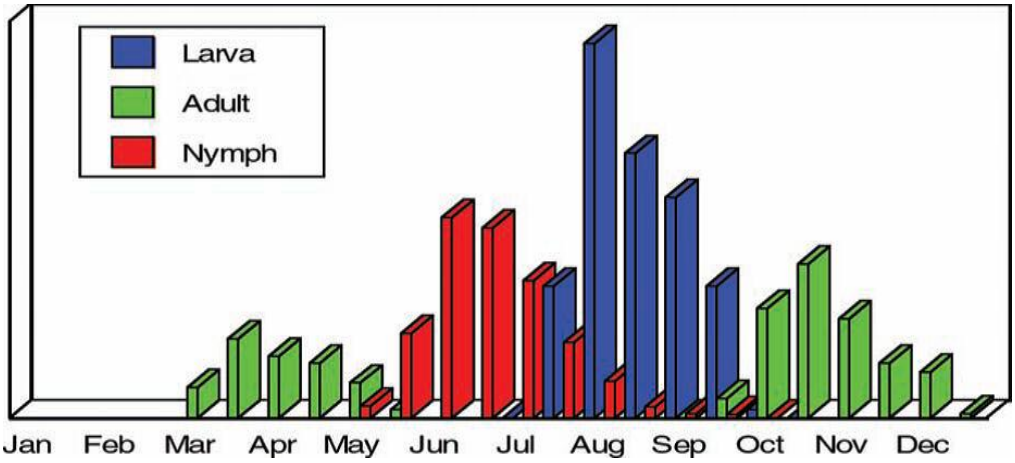
The larvae have 6 legs; later stages have 8 legs.

Besides Lyme Disease, this insect can carry other less common illnesses, such as Anaplasmosis, Babesiosis and Tick Paralysis.

This chart compares the sizes of some of the ticks found in the North-east. (The Lone Star Tick is not common in New England.)

The two-year life cycle of deer ticks





Seasonal activity of Deer Tick larvae, nymphs, and adults

Additional Information on Ticks:

Deer ticks thrive best in moist leaf litter on a forest floor. During its two-year cycle, a tick takes a blood meal only once in each of its three phases: larva, nymph and adult. The meal goes on for several days, after which the tick falls to the forest floor to digest, recover, wait out the winter or dry weather, or molt if immature. Eventually, hungry ticks climb a low branch or twig to seek a new host.

Tick larvae hatch without any Lyme spirochete. Larvae and nymphs feed on shrews, chipmunks and even birds to ingest the spirochete, but a meal from a deer mouse is the primary means for a tick becoming a carrier for Lyme Disease. These host vertebrates are immune to the Lyme Disease spirochete. The white-tailed deer is the primary host for adult ticks, providing a place for the female to find a mate, to drink a final blood meal before falling to the forest floor to over-winter and then release eggs for the next cycle.