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## New guidance on ticks to mitigate health risks

The National Pest Advisory Panel (NPAP) recently produced new guidance to help professionals deal with the consequences of ticks and tick-borne diseases following a rise in their numbers.



Ticks are important to human and animal health because they are responsible for transmitting diseases and the [Tick Surveillance Scheme](#), operated by Public Health England, has reported an increase in the distribution of ticks in the UK.

NPAP's [Pest Control Procedures Manual](#), which was developed in co-ordination with PHE, is aimed at pest control technicians, EHPs and other professionals.

The manual suggests the rise in the spread of ticks can be linked to changes in climate and varying habitats, as well as increasing numbers and spread of deer. It is being recognised that ticks are also increasing in urban areas due to the development of wildlife corridors and green spaces within towns and cities.

Increasing numbers of ticks is a concern for NPAP as they are able to feed on a wide range of hosts, making them efficient disease vectors.

The most important tick-borne pathogen in the UK is *Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato*, which causes Lyme disease in humans and following initial infection, which is localised to the site of the tick bite and commonly characterised by an expanding red rash, the bacteria may spread to other parts of the body.

If infected, people can be at risk of facial palsy, meningitis and radiculopathy (spinal nerve root inflammation) occurring within weeks or months of infection.

In England and Wales, approximately 1,000 laboratory-confirmed cases of Lyme disease are reported every year, with an additional 2,000 cases thought to receive treatment from a GP.

Since 2001, laboratory-confirmed case numbers have increased in England and Wales and while this is likely due to greater awareness and improved testing and reporting, as well as increased

participation in outdoor leisure activities, there has been an increase in the abundance and distribution of ticks.

As people are increasingly enjoying outdoor leisure activities, NPAP's manual suggests steps on how the public can avoid coming into contact with ticks. Examples include walking on clearly defined paths to avoid vegetation, using insect repellent and wearing long trousers long-sleeved tops.

There have also been increasing reports of non-native ticks on dogs, which causes the owner's house to become infected.

The tick species associated with these infestations is the brown dog tick and unlike ticks commonly found in the UK, this species can survive indoors, which can lead to infestations if left untreated. NPAP therefore advises pet owners to be vigilant and inspect their animals for ticks, particularly dogs that have recently travelled abroad or been imported.

Bob Mayho, CIEH Principal Policy Officer and Chair of NPAP, said: "The growth in the number of ticks is clearly a concern as they can cause some pretty serious diseases and local authorities may need to develop plans to mitigate the risks through environmental management and tick awareness strategies.

"This guidance has expertly been developed by NPAP and we recommend that professionals take on the advice in order to protect the health and wellbeing of the public and their pets."

NPAP was established in 2001 to provide a UK strategic focus on pest management and provide specialist advice and guidance to raise awareness and protect the public.

The Panel brings together national and international agencies, local authorities and industry experts from the CIEH, National Pest Technicians Association (NPTA), British Pest Control Association (BPCA), Natural England, APHA (Animal & Plant Health Agency), MPH (Manchester Port Health), Public Health England, Local Authorities, Pest Control Servicing Companies, Killgerm Group, University of Surrey and 6 leading industry consultants including representation from the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU).

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