



*"Inspiring Better Health for All"*

Forest County Health Department  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** May 12, 2026

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## **Forest County Health Department Awarded Funding to Improve Environmental Health**

Forest County Health Department and Florence County Health Department were awarded \$10,000 from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) to improve environmental public health in Forest and Florence Counties by lowering Lyme disease.

Thousands of Wisconsinites are diagnosed with Lyme disease every year. Lyme disease is the most common, but not the only, illness spread by ticks. Wisconsin (WI) is one of the states reporting the highest number of cases in the country, according to DHS. WI had 6,469 cases of Lyme disease in 2024, the highest on record. On average, about 4,600 cases were reported each year during 2019-2023. The incidence of reported Lyme disease cases has quadrupled over the past 20 years.

Forest County reported 120 cases from 2010–2023; Florence County reported 112 cases from 2010-2023, though the actual number may be higher due to underreporting. Both counties share similar high-risk environmental conditions, including dense forests, abundant deer, and established deer tick populations. Both counties have older, rural populations with limited healthcare access, which can delay diagnosis and increase complication risk. Seasonal surges in tick activity, combined with gaps in prevention awareness, make Lyme disease a continuing health burden for residents and visitors.

This project is a dual county outreach initiative designed to reduce the risk of tick-borne illness through prevention education, resource distribution, and community engagement in Forest and Florence Counties. Leveraging current WI DHS data showing rising Lyme disease incidence across the rural north, the project will focus on high-risk seasons, locations, and populations. Grant funding was used to pay for tick supplies, and staff time to assemble the kits. Distribution of the kits begins now throughout the community.

The project in Forest and Florence Counties is one of 15 environmental public health projects being funded throughout the state through the *Taking Action with Data* funding opportunity from the [Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program](#), which is housed at the WI DHS.

For more information, Forest County Health Department can be reached at 715-478-3371, or visit <https://forestcountypublichealth.org>.



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For more information, Florence County Health Department can be reached at 715-528-4837, or visit our website at <https://florencewipublichealth.com>.

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