

Warning and Advice about Ticks

February 2020

In May 2019 we emailed members to warn of the risk of acquiring ticks and 'sign-posting' available advice on the subject. The email was prompted by experience on our May weekend at HF Holnicote House on Exmoor, when several ticks were acquired and had to be removed, either during the weekend or after returning home. A warning from NT Exmoor rangers had been relayed to those who attended the AGM at Holnicote House at the start of that walking weekend.

Since then, there has been further media publicity about the dangers of leaving ticks on the body, and the serious health issues that can result. A number of high-profile personalities have publicised their harrowing experiences, but the risks and dangers are still not understood widely by the public nor, it appears, by many GPs. With the more risky Spring and Summer seasons approaching soon we are therefore circulating this, freshly reviewed, advice to all members and it will also be put on the SSW website, from where it can be downloaded, along with our other core documents, at any time.

Here are two links to advice from 'Lime Disease Action' (LDA), the first about ticks generally and the second on how to remove them safely:

<https://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk/about-ticks/>

<https://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk/about-ticks/tick-removal/>

Contrary to what appears to be the conventional 'wisdom', please note that the latter advice says DON'T use nail varnish, toothpaste, etc, as it can cause the tick to regurgitate its stomach contents into you. It is important to avoid squeezing the tick's body, which may be gorged with your blood, now infected. Fine-pointed tweezers (NOT blunt eyebrow tweezers) may be used, at the neck of the tick and as close to your skin as possible or, preferably, a purpose-made tick removal tool. The following LDA link shows some types of tool available to buy from them:

<https://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk/what-we-are-doing/shop/>

"O'tom Tick Twisters", one of the most popular makes, and inexpensive, are also currently available from Amazon, as follows:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/OTom-02-3785-Otom-Tick-Twister/dp/B0089BOK12/ref=asc_df_B0089BOK12/?tag=googshopuk-21&linkCode=df0&hvadid=309819532054&hvpos=1o1&hvnetw=g&hvrnd=1883166705021561902&hvpon e=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=1007031&hvtargid=pla-400577032211&psc=1&th=1&psc=1

Other **general advice** (by no means exhaustive – see the above links for full advice):

Try and keep body and limbs covered when walking through vegetation, especially in warm, damp conditions;

Wear light coloured clothing, so any ticks 'acquired' but not yet through to your body can be seen more easily;

Check yourself / your partner over after walks (or gardening spells) to make sure you're not harbouring unwanted guests.

D. Finney, 12 February 2020