



# Safety Alert

## Lymes Disease Incident

27th June 2019

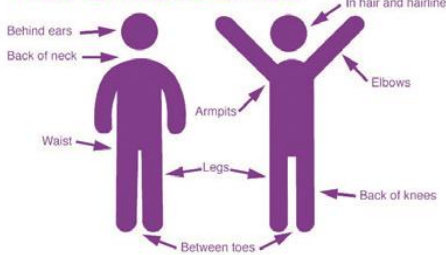
The following pages of this safety alert were issued by Highways England's supply chain partner:

**WSP**

# SAFETY ALERT



## Tick Check Zones



## Suspected Case of Lyme Disease.

### How did it happen?

During ecology survey work on the A27 Arundel, a colleague recently picked up ticks on their body despite taking precautions. The area is known to contain a high concentration of the insects and this part of the country is considered a 'hot spot' for the provenance of Lyme. Following blood tests for unrelated reasons, their GP noted a high number of white blood cells and after discussions about Lyme exposure decided to commence treatment for **suspected** Lyme disease.

**What are ticks?** Ticks are small, spider like blood feeding creatures which can carry several diseases harmful to humans. Ticks live in vegetation & are present across almost all the UK. They are particularly endemic in woodland, heathland areas and areas with livestock, but ticks can also be found in cities and gardens. Ticks are most active March to October and enjoy warm humid climates and habitats.

**Should I be concerned?** Anyone that works out on site or actively enjoys the outdoors, increases their potential risk of contracting Lyme disease from infected ticks. The prevalence of, and the proportion of infected ticks, as well as positive diagnosis of Lyme's disease is increasing in the UK.

**What is Lyme disease?** Lyme, and other tick related diseases are caused by a bacterium carried by infected ticks (not all ticks carry harmful diseases) which can be transmitted to people when bitten. Lyme disease complications can range from mild to serious. Lyme disease is very difficult to diagnose, with common false negative blood results, but early antibiotic treatment is vital to prevent spread throughout the body.

Initial symptoms can include:

- A skin rash sometimes shaped as a bullseye, which can expand and move around the body
- Tiredness
- Chills
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle and joint pain
- Swollen lymph glands
- Blurred vision

If untreated within first few weeks, it can develop into long term debilitating illnesses which are difficult to manage:

- Arthritis
- Nervous system problems
- Paralysis of facial muscles (Bell's palsy)
- Memory problems
- Irregular heart rhythm

### DO

- Risk assess Lyme disease for your site visits and plan works accordingly.
- If there is a risk, consider the following:
  - Consult [NHS advice](#) on ticks prior to survey
  - Wear long-sleeved clothing / long trousers and tuck in clothing to reduce chances of ticks getting to skin
  - Wear light-coloured clothing (e.g. high-viz) so ticks are visible and can be brushed off person before they bite
  - Regularly inspect your clothing during works and brush off ticks to prevent biting
  - Consider using insect repellent on either your cloths or skin to decrease chances of tick bites (observe manufacturer's instructions for use).
  - Avoid moving through dense vegetation where ticks may be present plan work to avoid areas known contain lots of ticks
  - Carry tick removing tools and follow instructions for use when removing ticks
  - Check body carefully each day ASAP after survey (concentrate on Tick Check Zones), consider a 'tick buddy' for difficult to see areas – remove any ticks using tick removal tool and clean area.
- If you are unable to remove ticks, seek immediate medical assistance.
- Record any known bite incidents on your reporting system
- Know the symptoms; if they appear within 3 months after work in a tick area, seek **immediate** medical advice, tell them your work puts you at risk of contracting Lyme and you want to be treated on that assumption, as per NHS advice (British Infection Association, 2011).

### DON'T

- Panic!
- Crush a tick's body or squeeze the body of the tick;
- Apply petroleum jelly, nail polish or any other chemical;
- Attempt to burn a tick off;
- Use fingernails to try and remove a tick;
- Make excuses to avoid seeking medical attention, or
- Disregard any potential symptom – even if you didn't find a tick, but have been in an area at risk - get it checked out!