

TAKE A SERIOUS HEALTH THREAT SERIOUSLY

By Judi Weil

Most of us on Cape Cod feel we have discovered our little corner of paradise. However, living on the Cape does not come without some risks, a very serious one being the growing threat of Lyme disease and other tick-borne infections. We all need to take precautions and take the time to understand the risk. Fortunately, a growing library of information and advice is available to Cape Codders.

Although ticks bite and feed year-round, we seem to be more aware of them in the warmer months. And although these little critters carry other diseases, we seem to be most aware of Lyme. That's a good start, but it's hardly the whole story.

Research projects across the Cape are working to prevent infections and limit the tick population. For example, deer feeding stations along some of the Cape's conservation trails provide corn treated with the insecticide permethrin. It coats a deer's fur, so ticks die when they crawl across the animal.

There are many ways we can protect ourselves from ticks: repellents we can buy, treated clothing that is safer to wear in tick-infested areas and store-bought permethrin for treating our clothes and shoes. Keep in mind that ticks could be infesting your own back yard. They love shady and humid spots which you might have on the edges of your property, so a "tick check" of your arms and legs is appropriate whenever you've been outside.

It is also important to protect your pet, not only for their sake but because cats, dogs and other domesticated animals can carry ticks into your home. A growing roster of products provide topical protection for pets without harming them.

The point is that information about ticks is easily available and should not be ignored. One Cape Cod source packed with useful information is the Orleans Citizens Forum (OCF) website at www.OrleansCitizensForum.org. OCF sponsored a comprehensive expert symposium on tick-borne disease three years ago. That event can still be viewed on YouTube. On the OCF website, you can find links to that tick forum and to many other informative articles. The list is updated frequently to help you stay abreast of the latest knowledge and advice available.

— *Judi Weil is on the Board of Directors of the
Orleans Citizens Forum*