



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Cabarrus County Public Health Officials Encourage Residents to ‘Fight the Bite’**

May is Tick and Mosquito Awareness Month, and Cabarrus Health Alliance officials are reminding residents to be careful, because warmer, wetter weather brings out more of the disease-carrying pests.

Residents are urged to take simple steps to prevent insects from biting them and to reduce insect breeding conditions around the home.

“Spring rains and warmer weather provide ideal breeding conditions for mosquitoes and ticks,” states local Health Director Dr. William F. Pilkington. “Ticks and mosquitoes can be more than just a nuisance – they can also make people seriously ill.”

Chrystal Swinger, RS, Environmental Health Specialist, Cabarrus Health Alliance, suggests these simple steps can help ‘Fight the Bite’.

- Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Avoid areas where there are a lot of mosquitoes.
- Avoid being outdoors at dawn and dusk.
- Use repellents containing DEET (30% or less for adults, 10% or less for children) to prevent mosquito bites, carefully following the label instructions.
- Keep screens on windows and doors in good repair.

You can also protect yourself, your family, and your community from illnesses carried by mosquitoes by helping to reduce mosquito-breeding sites as follows:

- Empty, destroy, recycle, or cover containers like tires, tin cans, buckets, and bottles that hold water where mosquitoes can lay their eggs.
- Change water in pet’s bowls and birdbaths at least once a week.
- Remove or empty dishes under potted plants.
- Stock ponds and ditches with native fish.
- Cover unused pools.
- Clean clogged rain gutters.
- Repair leaky outdoor faucets.
- Put special “donuts” made with mosquito-killing bacteria in water when mosquito eggs may hatch.

Swinger recommends “Make your backyard less tick friendly by keeping grass short, and removing plants that attract wild animals like deer and rodents, which carry ticks. Persons should remain vigilant about protecting themselves and children from ticks.”

Proper and prompt removal of ticks is the key to preventing infection. Use fine-tipped tweezers to remove ticks, getting as far forward near the head as possible and pulling steadily. Note the day you removed the tick on a calendar. If you become ill in the next two weeks or develop a skin rash within a month of the tick bite, tell your physician the date you removed the tick.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever is the most common tick-borne illness in North Carolina. According to the N.C. Division of Public Health, more than 260 cases of Rocky Mountain spotted fever were reported in North Carolina in 2009. The state also has other tick-borne illnesses. Last year, North Carolina reported more than 100 cases of Lyme disease and more than 60 cases of ehrlichiosis. Tick-borne diseases occur statewide.

La Crosse virus is the most common mosquito-borne illness. La Crosse virus is found mostly in western North Carolina. Two other mosquito-borne diseases, Eastern equine encephalitis and West Nile virus, are also found in North Carolina. While Eastern equine encephalitis is found largely in the eastern part of the state, West Nile virus is found statewide.

For additional information on mosquitoes and ticks, visit the following websites:

[www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/phpm](http://www.deh.enr.state.nc.us/phpm), [www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/arbovirus](http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/arbovirus) and [www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/tick](http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/tick).