



CDC Quickly Removes Website Data Stating Lone Star Ticks and Brown Dog Ticks Transmit Lyme Disease

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Does the CDC *know* that Lone Star ticks are transmitting Lyme disease to humans? The stunning information plainly appeared on the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's *Center for Global Health* website - a website for the CDC's *DPDx, Laboratory Identification of Parasites of Public Health Concern*. Their stated goal is to "use the Internet to strengthen diagnosis of parasitic diseases, both in the United States and abroad." As recently as Thursday, October 21, 2010 their online Tick Image Library stated that the Lyme disease bacteria, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, can be transmitted by Brown Dog, *Rhipicephalus sanguineus*, and Lone Star, *Amblyomma americanum*, ticks. These statements appeared for quite some time and the two web pages had been reviewed by CDC employees as recently as summer 2010.

But what does this mean and why does it matter? Currently, some public health officials, including those at the CDC, continue to claim Lyme disease in humans in the South is rare to nonexistent. They appear to be skeptical about the countless, compelling reports of Lyme disease from our citizens and numerous medical providers. (See footnote below referencing a current news article exemplifying what has been the typical CDC stance.) Public health officials seem to support their "Lyme-in-the-South-is-rare" stance using the fact that the well-known vector of Lyme disease, nymphal black-legged ("deer") ticks, typically don't feed on humans in the South. Although *adult* deer ticks do parasitize Southerners (in fall and winter), due to their size, nymphs are more likely to go unnoticed so have greater opportunity to transmit the disease.

If Lone Star and other ticks can transmit Lyme disease, all bets are off. As one researcher noted, even if only 1% of Lone Star ticks are infected, because they bite humans so frequently and are so widespread, it poses a *tremendous* health threat. This information stands to change the Lyme disease prevalence map, as Lone Stars are found from Florida to Canada and halfway across the country. When Lone Star and Brown Dog ticks are included as Lyme disease vectors, it means chances of contracting Lyme disease in these areas are *far* greater than previously calculated, using "deer ticks" alone. It means the thousands of anecdotal tales from so-called "non- endemic" areas should be taken seriously, and not automatically dismissed as "false positives", as is so often now the case.

In mid-October, a curious patient advocate contacted the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control to confirm what she read on their website- that these other ticks transmit Lyme disease. But, the CDC employees at this particular division (different from CDC's *Center for Global Health*), quickly sent word that only the black-legged tick transmits *B. burgdorferi*. They wrote that their website was inaccurate.

It might be understandable - a *single* error published about *one type of tick*; but *two different mistakes* by CDC employees about *two types of ticks* appearing on *separate pages* of this official *Center for Global Health Tick Image Library* certainly raises doubt. The data in question was removed within 48 hours.

In the Southeast, the aggressive Lone Star, *Amblyomma americanum*, is the tick most commonly found biting humans. Many research studies have documented *Borrelia burgdorferi* in various tick species. A Murray State (KY) University study in the early 1990's found *Borrelia burgdorferi* in 5 different ticks in the Southeast, including the Lone Star. There are numerous uncounted reports of Southerners exhibiting Lyme disease signs and symptoms with positive tests, many even CDC reportable, following Lone Star tick bites. Many other patients don't save the ticks, but live in areas where deer ticks are rarely found and Lone Stars are abundant. Ticks in the *Amblyomma* family are also implicated in South American Lyme disease cases.

Public Health Officials do not deny that the Lyme disease bacterium, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, has been found in Lone Star ticks. Officials, however, are often quoted in media articles implying that these ticks cannot *transmit* Lyme disease because their saliva is a *borreliacide*- that is, it supposedly *kills* borrelia. If that is the case, it's very disturbing indeed that researchers appear to be wasting thousands of tax dollars chasing down another *Borrelia* in Lone Star ticks -the relapsing fever spirochete, ***Borrelia lonestari***. (This is *not* a *Lyme disease* borrelia). If ***Borrelia lonestari*** can survive the Lone Star tick's borrelia-killing-saliva-machine, why couldn't ***Borrelia burgdorferi***?

Other ticks may not transmit Lyme disease as efficiently as black-legged ticks, however, adequate investigations involving various vectors and hosts haven't been undertaken to conclusively disprove transmission to humans. For instance, troubling is the fact that some lizards cannot get Lyme (their blood has a borreliacidal component) while other lizards can actually harbor the bacteria for long periods of time. Eight lizard species found in the South can maintain *Bb*, and similar findings have been documented in various lizards around the world. If *some* animals can become infected while others *in the same family* cannot, clearly more research is needed to determine the diseases transmitted to *humans* by Lone Star ticks (particularly when there is substantial anecdotal evidence that they are transmitting Lyme borreliosis). What happens in the lab to a few animal types doesn't always reflect what is occurring out in the real world.

The late Dr. Ed Masters from Missouri reported that many of his patients tested fully positive for Lyme disease after Lone Star tick bites. They had serious symptoms nearly identical to traditional Lyme disease. Some of Masters' patients were not positive. This is consistent with the reports of many southeastern patients and medical practitioners. Seronegative Lyme also occurs in "endemic" regions and is well documented in published research. (For an account of Dr. Masters' findings and an overview of Lyme disease in the South, read Chapter 28 of Discover magazine editor Pam Weintraub's book, *Cure Unknown: Inside the Lyme Epidemic*.)

To date, it is our understanding that researchers and public health officials haven't been able to culture the strain(s) of *Borrelia burgdorferi* carried by the Lone Star tick. (The syphilis spirochete has never been cultured, either.) They have been identified using molecular methods. The southern Lyme disease strain may be slightly different and there may be various other borrelia strains and/or pathogens that Lone Stars can transmit, but one of them certainly appears to be *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Some strains may be

generating only a mild illness, but many patients report developing very serious, life-altering, and often chronic neurological, heart, and arthritic symptoms.

This again raises the question: How many people are being misdiagnosed due to the medical myth: “*We don't have Lyme disease here*”? Former National Institutes of Health (NIH) Senior Investigator and Lyme disease researcher David Volkman, Ph.D., M.D., hits the nail on the head with his recent comments regarding the circular reasoning: “*We don't have Lyme disease here, so we don't report it. We don't report it, so we don't have Lyme disease here.*”

In an effort to protect public health, we call upon public health officials to issue immediate alerts to the medical community to encourage them to consider Lyme Borreliosis and other tick-borne diseases in *all* areas of our country; to become educated about the signs and symptoms of these diseases; to understand the limited capabilities of current testing methods; and to treat tick-borne infections seriously and promptly.

Footnote:

Ironically, as this article was being edited, a CDC official was *again* quoted downplaying Lyme disease in the South. In an October 26, 2010 article published in an Alabama newspaper, *The Anniston Star*, CDC official Barbara Johnson cited both the now disproven *all lizards kill Lyme bacteria* and the *Lone Star tick saliva is borreliacidal* theories as apparent justification for why Lyme disease doesn't occur in the South. Meanwhile, over twenty years of published research documenting *Borrelia burgdorferi* in thousands of tick and animal specimens from across the South appears to be ignored. The cotton mouse, the cotton rat, and the eastern woodrat have been found to be competent southern reservoirs for *Bb*. Sixty to eighty percent of small mammals tested in some southeastern areas contain *Borrelia burgdorferi*, and in some pockets, a southern biologist found the bacteria in 17 to 24% of Lone Star ticks. Patients in the South, with positive test results, history of rashes, and devastating symptoms following Lone Star tick bites, continue to report that their cases are not taken seriously or are dismissed by many medical providers and public health officials. Patients, who face severe obstacles in obtaining proper diagnosis and treatment, don't *care* what tick or strain is involved. They want *help*. What will it take for their voices to be heard?

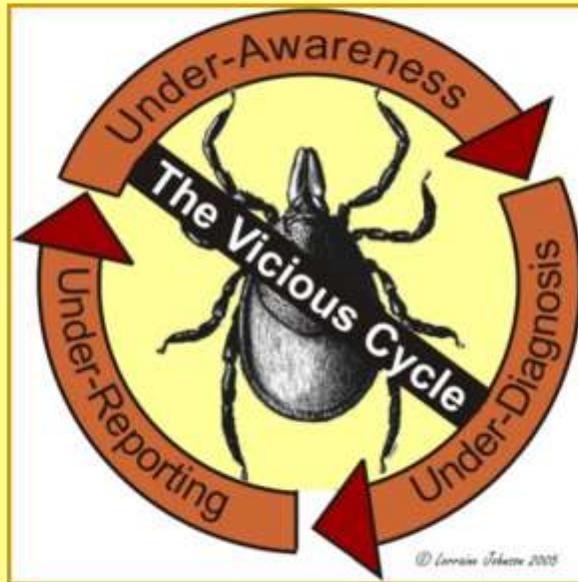
- To see the CDC Tick Library web pages accessed 10/20/10 which stated that Lone Star ticks (*Amblyomma americanum*) and Brown Dog ticks (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*) transmit Lyme disease (*Borrelia burgdorferi* or Lyme Borreliosis) click [HERE](#).
- To visit the CDC web pages now (with the data removed following the Lyme patient advocate's inquiry), click links below:

http://www.dpd.cdc.gov/DPDx/HTML/ImageLibrary/S-Z/Ticks/body_Ticks_il1.htm

http://www.dpd.cdc.gov/DPDx/HTML/ImageLibrary/S-Z/Ticks/body_Ticks_il4.htm

- To read the article in *The Anniston Star*, click [HERE](#).

Awareness drives everything!



Courtesy of Lorraine Johnson JD, MBA
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