

Health

Tick-borne illnesses on the rise

Public warned to take precaution against Lyme and other tick-associated diseases

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

GILBERTOWN — With the beginning of spring, an increasing number of people will be headed outdoors. And an increasing number will suffer insect bites, such as mosquitoes or ticks. The Center for Disease Control and Preven-

tion (CDC) reports that spring and summer offer the highest incidence of problems related to insect bites — in particular Lyme Disease. Approximately 22,000 new cases of Lyme disease are reported each year, according to the national Lyme Disease Association. In 2005, the last year on record, the CDC reported some 23,305 cases of the disease, with certain geographic areas more prone to see increased cases. The highest incidence of Lyme Disease occurs in the New England states. In 2005, for example, Connecticut saw 1,810 cases, and Massachusetts recorded 2,336. Pennsylvania reported 4,287 and New York reported the most cases with 5,565. While Alabama only recorded 3 cases in 2005,

the CDC is issuing warnings about a possible increase in that number among Southern states this year. Lyme Disease is caused by the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* and is transmitted to humans by the bite of infected blacklegged ticks. Children ages 5 - 9 are the most likely age group to become infected by a tick-borne disease and to suffer from the Lyme and Lyme-like illnesses. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash called erythema migrans. If left untreated, the infection can spread to the joints, heart, and the nervous system. The symptoms can develop into chronic, long-term health problems that significantly affect

the quality of life for the patient. Lyme disease is diagnosed by an evaluation of symptoms, and the likelihood that the patient was exposed to an infected tick. Laboratory tests are used in the later stages of disease. Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with antibiotics. But the key to treatment is to attack the infection early. The best course of action, as with most diseases, is prevention. Lyme Disease can be prevented by using insect repellent, removing ticks promptly, landscaping, and pest management. In addition to Lyme Disease, similar illnesses are caused by other tick species and can be just as much of a health threat.

The lone star tick, for example, does not transmit Lyme disease, but can exhibit similar symptoms. This type of tick is more prevalent in southern states like Alabama than is the Lyme Disease-causing tick. This condition has been named southern tick-associated rash illness (STARI). The lone star tick, *Amblyomma americanum*, is found throughout the southeastern and south-central states. The number of lone star ticks in this area has increased over the past 20 to 30 years. All three life stages (larva, nymph, adult) of the lone star tick will feed on humans and on other animals, including dogs and cats. The ticks are often brought into the home on pets.

Patients bitten by lone star ticks will occasionally develop a circular rash similar to the rash of early Lyme disease. The rash may be accompanied by fatigue, headache, fever, and muscle and joint pains. In the cases of STARI, the rash and accompanying symptoms have resolved following treatment with antibiotics. STARI has not been linked to any arthritic, neurological, or chronic symptoms. Local residents are urged to take precautions against tick bites and to respond immediately if symptoms develop. Anyone with a recent tick bite and an expanding rash that is at least 5 centimeters in diameter is encouraged to contact their physician immediately.



Brenda Carlisle

Carlisle is Employee of the Month

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

BUTLER — “I didn’t realize until I came to work here just what is involved in nursing home care,” says Brenda Carlisle, Employee of the Month at Willow Trace Nursing Center.

For nearly 3 years, Carlisle has been responsible for accounts receivable and insurance filing at the Butler facility. As the Business Office Manager, her role has meant much solo office work, but it has also meant getting to know the staff and residents in a way that makes them feel like family.

Working in a medical atmosphere is not new to Carlisle. She worked for over 20 years in related fields, including hospital and clinic work.

Although her current role does not give her regular patient contact, Carlisle says that one of the highlights of her job has been getting to know the residents she sees each day.

“I have several residents who come by my office everyday,” she says with a smile. “That’s what I enjoy the most, getting to stop and spend time with them.”

While she admits that it is easy to become attached to the residents, she says she has come to understand that some of them will eventually pass away. That fact is one of the reasons why she feels that quality of care and time spent with the residents is vital.

“Many of them come here to live out the remainder of their time,” she says. “You want to make it as pleasant as you can. That’s what we’re here for.”

“Places like this used to be looked at as a last resort,” she adds. “But now we have 20-day rehab here, and we have residents who are here just because they need extra assistance and don’t have a good place to live.”

Carlisle agrees that the image of the nursing home has changed in recent years, from a negative place to one that is intrinsically positive. “The smell, the look — everything here is positive,” she says. “It’s a different place. I enjoy my job here.”



Cooking with Diabetes

BUTLER -- Local residents with diabetes attended a special cooking class just for them last Thursday at the Choctaw County Cooperative Extension System. The 2-hour session included information on such topics as cooking desserts using artificial sweeteners, preparing main dishes, and adding healthy side dishes. Those who attend the classes will learn to prepare 3 recipes in each of the 3 classes. Other sessions will be held on March 15 and 22. Costs for the classes will be \$20 per attendee. For more information, call 205-459-2133.

Choctaw Sun photo by Tommy Campbell

Local embalmers participate in eye donor seminar

BIRMINGHAM — Charles Ford and Thomas Jackson, embalmers at Hayden and Butler Funeral Home, in Lisman, recently participated in an educational seminar to help master skills necessary to properly prepare an eye donor.

The seminar, “Embalming & Restoration: Donation Issues and Techniques,” is part of a series being offered for funeral home directors and embalmers in several Alabama cities by the Alabama Eye Bank (AEB) and Jefferson State Community College (JSCC).

Seminar instructor Dr. William Counce, director of Funeral Services Education at JSCC, has been teaching classes on funeral service techniques for more than 28 years. Also participating, as instructors are Jzyk S. Ennis and Venus N. Riley-Smith, both educators at JSCC, and James Melton of the Alabama Eye Bank.

“We are pleased to work closely with the Eye Bank in educating embalmers in the correct techniques following eye donation since funeral homes play such a significant role in supporting the opportunity to provide the gift of sight,” Dr. Counce said.

Doyce V. Williams, AEB executive director, stressed the importance of educating embalmers



Submitted photo Doyce Williams (center), Executive Director of the Alabama Eye Bank, presents Thomas Jackson (left) and Charles Ford (right), both of Hayden and Butler Funeral Home, in Lisman, with their certificate of course completion.

because so many Alabama donors can now be determined through AEB’s access to the state donor registry.

“With access to the names of over one million Alabamians on the state donor registry, we feel that continually educating embalmers in these specific areas is vital to the donation process. Family members can take comfort in knowing that their loved one’s wishes will be honored, and they will be properly taken care of at

the time of death,” Williams said. “There is no disfigurement associ-

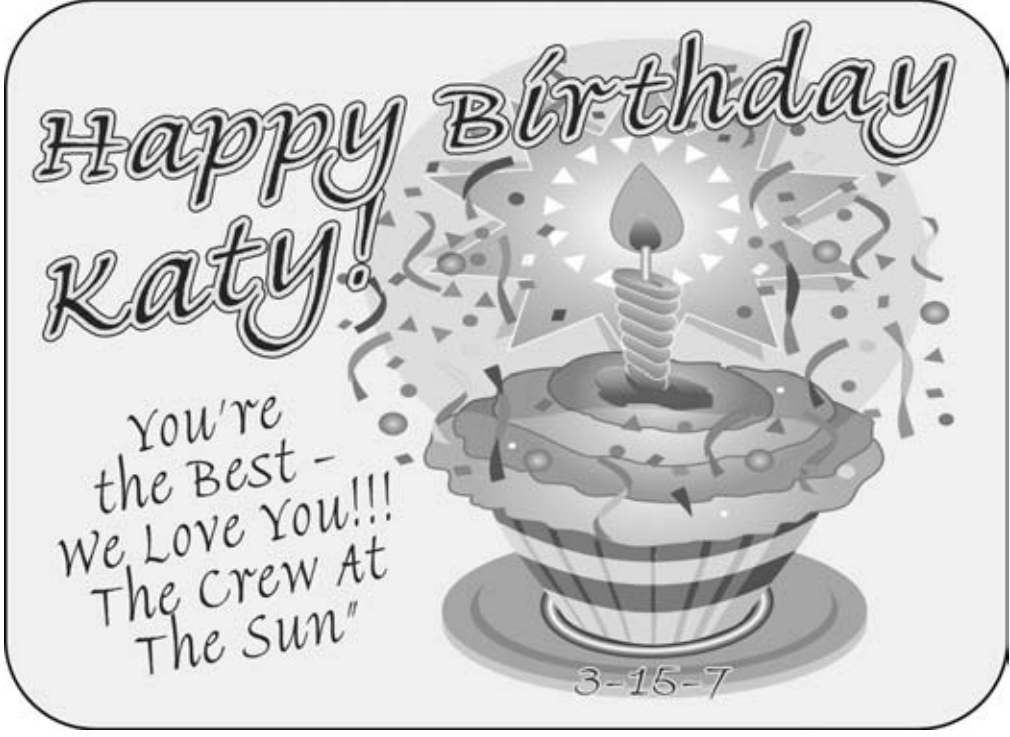
ated with eye donation due in large part to the expertise of funeral

homes, such as Hayden and Butler, where Mr. Ford and Mr. Jackson are embalmers,” Williams added.

AEB continuously works with funeral homes to identify Alabamians who have pledged donation. With more than half of the state’s deaths occurring outside hospitals, funeral homes are vital links to ensure donors’ wishes are carried out. By visiting AEB’s website at www.alabamaeyebank.org and clicking on the link to the donor registry, Alabamians can register their wish to give the gift of sight.

The Eye Bank’s main office is in Birmingham with regional offices in Huntsville, Mobile and Montgomery. The Eye Bank’s objective is to obtain quality human eye tissue and distribute it to qualified physicians where the need exists anywhere in the world.

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