

RIVER VIEWS – MID-SUMMER EDITION – August 1, 2015

We don't wish to alarm anyone unnecessarily; however, a community resident recently learned that he had been exposed to Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) some time during the past 3 years while living in Riverview Estates. This is a disease passed to humans by ticks, like the more familiar Lyme Disease. Unfortunately, this disease can be much more serious than Lyme. One person out of every twenty who get it will die... **THAT IS SERIOUS BUSINESS!** If someone is infected with the RMSF bacteria and is not treated very soon after symptoms develop, they will very likely end up in the hospital and could die.

We have many kinds of wildlife in our community including the deer which are the vector for many ticks. The common dog tick and another common tick called the Lone Star tick can carry RMSF. If you have a dog, it can get RMSF and dogs often die from this disease. Deer ticks are common and they are the most common carriers of Lyme Disease.

Tick born diseases are no laughing matter. It is much easier to prevent a tick bite than it is to either detect some of these diseases or to treat them. So what precautions should you take? If you must walk in tall grass or thickly wooded area such as the areas around our ponds or the woods near the walking path, it is essential to use a DEET product on your arms and legs or a repellent such as Permethrin on your clothing. Wear light colored clothes and tuck pants cuffs into your stockings if you must walk in these areas. Inspect yourself very closely after such excursions. The nymph form of these ticks is extremely small and difficult to see. Many people who have gotten RMSF did not know they had a tick bite. Have someone else check your back and any areas you may not be able to see. If you find a tick, carefully remove it so that the head is not left in the skin (and don't squeeze the body or it may inject material into you). Save the tick by putting it in a medicine bottle filled with rubbing alcohol and a cotton ball. If you notice a bulls-eye type rash or any kind of rash, or if you are feeling sick within 2 weeks of a tick bite, see your doctor immediately. The sooner you get treatment the more likely you will recover completely.

While we are giving summer-time safety hints, here are some recommendations for use of sunscreens. Get a **BROAD SPECTRUM** sunscreen that protects against UVA (which causes skin cancers and early skin aging) & UVB (the one that causes sunburn) with a SPF of 30 or more and is **WATER RESISTANT**. Apply 15 to 20 minutes before sun exposure and reapply every 2 hours unless you are getting wet (sweating or swimming). Check the label to see how often to reapply. Make sure to use plenty to cover exposed skin, even on a cloudy day. Infants should not be exposed to the sun if younger than 6 months and young children should always have sunscreen on before being in the sun.

If you are taking any medications (especially an antibiotic), be sure it does not cause sun sensitivity as one of its side effects. If so, wear long sleeves and, if possible, do not expose yourself to the sun. Reactions can be severe.

If you are worried about Vitamin D and sun exposure, 10 minutes in the sun without sunscreen provides adequate Vitamin D – or just be sure to get it in your diet.

Be safe and enjoy the rest of the summer no matter what you do or where you are.