

# Butte County Tick Specimen Collection and Submittal Procedure

9-6-2015

## Tick Removal

**Proper removal of attached ticks is necessary to assure that the parts needed for identification are not lost and the tick remains intact.**

- Using sharp-pointed tweezers, your fingers protected by latex or rubber gloves, a paper towel, or tissue, grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull straight out with steady, even pressure.
- Do not twist or jerk the tick as this may cause damage to the tick. Twisting or jerking could cause mouthparts to break off in the skin.
- Do not use Vaseline, fingernail polish, alcohol, cigarettes or matches to try to kill or remove the tick.

## Tick Storage and Preservation

- BEST METHOD -- Place tick into a sturdy (preferably plastic) sealable container with either a screw or snap cap lid.
- SECOND BEST -- Place the tick in a plastic “baggy” (Ziploc). Make sure that a little air is left in the bag before sealing. This will help prevent the tick from being damaged during transit.
- **Moisten, with water only, any absorbent material (i.e. paper towel or cotton ball) and place in container or “baggy” with tick.**
- **DO NOT** attempt to preserve the tick in anything other than water, as it will render the specimen un-testable.
- **DO NOT** use a container that has contained anything other than water without properly washing, rinsing and drying prior to storing the tick.

## Tick Transport and Submission

When possible, tick specimens should be brought directly to the Butte County Public Health Laboratory, in Chico, for testing.

- Butte County Public Health Clinics, in both Oroville and Chico, may serve as secondary submission sites.
- If shipping the specimen via mail or courier, please be sure that whatever container used, is placed in a padded outer container to ensure that the inner container arrives unbroken. Include the following information inside of the outer container BUT NOT inside the container with the tick;

- Full name of the person the tick was removed from
  - Date and time of removal.
  - Complete contact address.
  - Telephone number for reporting of the result.
  - Geographical location where the tick was acquired.
- A submittal form may be found [here](#). Include a check or money order for to cover the test fee made payable to Butte County Public Health.

## **Testing and Turn-around-times**

- Only one species of tick, *Ixodes pacificus*, carries the causative agent, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, for Lyme disease. This is the only species that will **be tested** by the Laboratory.
- The Laboratory will identify specimens submitted for identification usually within 2-3 days of receipt.
- All Ixodid (hard) ticks, with the exception of *Ixodes pacificus*, will be identified and reported as not being the species responsible for transmitting Lyme's disease. **No further testing is performed.**
- All other specimens submitted (i.e. not ticks) will be identified. Also it will reported out as not testable for Lyme disease.
- Ticks identified as *Ixodes pacificus* will be examined for proper storage and condition then tested for the presence of *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the causative agent of Lyme disease, using the [IFA technique](#). Specimens that fail to pass the proper storage and condition will be reported out as unsatisfactory.
- IFA testing will be performed once a week. The results will be made available the following business day by telephone or fax.
- Please allow 7 full business days for reporting of results. Under no circumstances will STAT testing be accommodated.

## **Reporting of Results**

- Results will be telephoned, faxed and/or mailed the next business day following examination and testing.
- Positive results will generally be reported as: Positive: IFA POSITIVE FOR BORRELIA BURGDORFERI, causative agent of Lyme's disease.
- Negative results will generally be reported as: Negative: IFA Negative for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, causative agent of Lyme's disease.
- If the specimen is untestable by IFA, the reason will be briefly described.