

Report Your Tick Encounter!

The Bedford Health Department wants to hear from you about recent or past tick encounters! The Health Department has created a tick tracker or tick map, also referred to as a “Tick Heat Map”, to determine where in Bedford people and animals are encountering ticks. This information will help support future tick mitigation strategies in town such as the installation of additional tick barriers. To report a recent or past tick encounter, scan the QR code or navigate to <https://www.mapsonline.net/bedfordma/forms/tablet.html.php?id=919676922> to access the Tick Heat Map.



What is a Tick Fencing Barrier?

The purpose of a tick fencing barrier is to reduce exposure to ticks from wooded areas. In 2019, the Town of Bedford installed a tick fencing barrier at the South Road Soccer Fields to prevent tick encounters. The barrier at the South Road field has a 3-foot-wide concrete strip to deter ticks from crossing into the grassy field. It also has a 450-foot-long chain link fence on top of the concrete, to keep athletic balls from rolling into the woods to prevent potential tick encounters. Tick barriers are a helpful tool because ticks are unlikely to cross a 3-foot barrier made of mulch, gravel, or concrete. The fencing discourages animals, which may act as hosts for ticks, from entering the grassy area and blocks balls from rolling into the woods requiring humans to enter the potential tick environment. It is important to remember the area between the woods and the fence is still a potential tick environment and people must stay out of this area to prevent tick exposures. If you have ticks in your own yard, you may want to consider installing a similar tick fencing barrier!

What is a Tick Heat Map?

The Tick Heat Map utilizes the Bedford Geographic Information System (GIS) to track the location of a tick encounter, as reported by the user. The Tick Heat Map may be accessed through the Health Department website link or through the QR code which will direct you to a website that is able to map your current location, or you may manually enter a past location by using the interactive map. You also have the option to answer questions related to your tick encounter and upload a photo of the tick. Reporting a tick encounter only takes a few minutes and will greatly assist the Town of Bedford with ongoing prevention efforts related to tick-borne illnesses. Any data collected will be anonymous, and your personal data will not be collected.

Why are Ticks a Health Concern?

Ticks are bugs that feed on the blood of mammals, birds, or reptiles. Black-legged (deer) ticks and dog ticks are found throughout Massachusetts and may spread different disease-causing germs when they bite you. The most common tick-borne diseases in Massachusetts are Lyme Disease, Babesiosis, and Anaplasmosis. Tick-borne illnesses can be very severe and taking steps to avoid tick bites is important. Ticks like to live in shady, moist areas, such as underbrush, leaf litter, woods, and tall grass. They have a two-year life cycle and feed off hosts such as mice and deer. Nymphal ticks are extremely small but can transmit diseases to humans. Ticks can live where grassy yards border wooded areas, ornamental plantings, and gardens, or anywhere it is shaded and there are leaves with high humidity. Ticks are generally found near the ground, in brushy or

wooded areas. They can't jump or fly. Instead, they climb tall grasses or shrubs and wait for a potential host to brush against them. When this happens, they climb onto the host and seek a site for attachment. Tick diseases are transmitted from the tick to a human or animal via a tick bite and can seriously impact an individual's health and lifestyle.

For tick bite prevention strategies and resources please visit the Bedford Health Department Tick Information webpage by navigating to <https://www.bedfordma.gov/board-of-health/pages/tick> or contact the Bedford Health Department at 781-275-6507.