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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tick and Tick-Borne Disease Seasonal Awareness Campaign
in Benzie and Leelanau Counties

As the warmer months approach, residents of Benzie and Leelanau counties are urged to be vigilant against ticks and tick-borne diseases. The increase in outdoor activities during this season elevates the risk of encountering ticks, making awareness and preventive measures crucial.

Tips to Reduce Tick Bites:

- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Cover up with long sleeves, pants, and tuck pants into socks or boots to minimize exposed skin.
- **Use Insect Repellent:** Apply an EPA-approved insect repellent containing DEET, picaridin, or other recommended ingredients to exposed skin and clothing.
- **Stay on Trails:** Stick to well-maintained trails and avoid brushing against vegetation, as ticks often wait on grass and leaves to latch onto passing hosts.
- **Perform Tick Checks:** Conduct thorough tick checks on yourself, family members, and pets after spending time outdoors. Pay special attention to hidden areas like the hairline, armpits, and groin.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Integrated Pest Management and Public Health Pest Specialist, Emily Pochubay, offers advice, "Pesticides such as tick repellents for people and products to protect pets can be effective tools to prevent tick bites. It's important to read and follow a pesticide's label directions to ensure the product is used properly, safely, and effectively. Use EPA's search tool to [find a repellent product that is right for you.](#)"

What to Do When Bitten by a Tick:

- **Remove Ticks Safely:** Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub, or soap and water.
- **Seek Medical Attention:** If you develop a rash, fever, or flu-like symptoms within 3 to 30 days after a tick bite, consult a healthcare professional immediately.

"Ticks thrive in wooded and grassy areas, posing a risk to individuals who enjoy outdoor activities such as hiking, camping, or gardening," said Eric Johnston, BLDHD's Environmental Director. "It's essential to be aware of the environment and take preventive measures to reduce the likelihood of tick bites."

"Even in early spring, ticks can be active whenever temperatures rise above 35 degrees," said Scott Tucker, Superintendent of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. "Remember to be vigilant and take precautions, especially when spending time outdoors in grassy, wooded, or brushy areas."

Additional Recommendations:

- **Modify Your Landscape:** Create tick-safe zones by clearing tall grass and brush around homes and at the edges of lawns.
- **Protect Pets:** Use tick preventives on pets and check them for ticks regularly. Pets can bring ticks into the home, increasing the risk for human exposure.
- **Stay Informed:** Stay updated on tick- and tick-borne disease information and share knowledge with friends and neighbors to promote community-wide awareness.

By following these guidelines, residents can significantly reduce the risk of tick bites and the potential transmission of Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases.

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