

LOGGING/FORESTRY SAFETY SERIES

ROCKY MOUNTAIN SPOTTED FEVER- TICK BITES

Photo credit: Cornelis F. de Hoop, PhD

Incident Summary:

A logging crew started a new job in southeast Arkansas on June 10th. The terrain was hilly and required some chainsaw work. Two men, Bob and Charlie, worked for about 5 hours in the morning before taking a lunch break. Bob and Charlie have been logging together for over 30 years. The men continued to work at the site for another four days before Charlie developed a fever and a severe headache. He complained of body aches and stomach pain. Charlie took some over the counter medications and stayed home from work for two days. He did not want to go to the doctor because he didn't have good insurance and the doctor was 45 minutes away. On June 17th, Charlie's symptoms had worsened. He couldn't eat and his wife noticed a rash on his wrists and ankles. His wife took him to the doctor. They ran multiple tests and asked Charlie about his work. Based on his work in logging and his test results, the doctor diagnosed him with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Charlie was treated with antibiotics, but he suffered from complications. He remained hospitalized for three days before returning home. It was another week before he returned to work.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do people get Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever?
2. What are the symptoms of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever?
3. How can you prevent tick bites?
4. Do you know how to properly remove ticks from your body?

Take Home Message:

Take precautions to protect yourself from ticks when performing outdoor work in tick habitats. The sooner you get treatment for Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, the better the outcome.



Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF):

RMSF is a tick-borne disease that can be extremely severe, even fatal. Outdoor workers should take caution in tick-prone areas, especially in the warmer months when ticks are more active. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Muscle pain
- Rash (usually develops several days after the bite)

Prevent tick bites by using repellants with DEET or Permethrin. Duct tape your pants to your boots to prevent ticks from accessing your legs and feet.

Check your body thoroughly after being in tick-infested areas. Don't forget to check ears, belly button, behind the knees, between the legs and in your hair.

Check clothing and pets for ticks as well. They can easily move on to humans from clothing or pets at a later time.

Information from CDC; <http://www.cdc.gov/rmsf/>

