

What percentage of ticks have Lyme disease?

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As the authors point out, “Concurrent polymicrobial infections in humans can have a synergistic effect and result in a more severe course of illness.” In an effort to investigate what percentage of ticks have Lyme disease, the researchers examined three tick species, including the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*), found in Suffolk County, Long Island.

Their study revealed that over half of the deer ticks (63%) were infected with at least one pathogen.

“*Borrelia burgdorferi* was the most prevalent pathogen (57% in adults; 27% in nymphs), followed by *Babesia microti* (14% in adults; 15% in nymphs), *Anaplasma phagocytophilum* (14% in adults; 2% in nymphs), *Borrelia miyamotoi* (3% in adults), and *Powassan virus* (2% in adults),” writes Sanchez-Vicente.

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Dual infections were detected in 19% of the *I. scapularis* ticks, while triple infections were detected in 3% of the ticks.

“Of note is that nearly one-quarter of the *I. scapularis* ticks tested had polymicrobial infections,” [writes Sanchez-Vicente](#), “and this justifies the modification of the clinical approach to tick-borne diseases to cover all infection possibilities.”

Three pathogens, *Anaplasmosis*, *Babesia* and *Ehrlichia*, which were detected in this study, infect blood cells and can be unknowingly transmitted through blood transfusions.

This warrants concern given that the ratio of Lyme disease cases to babesiosis cases has been approximately 4 to 1 for the last 8 years. “This ratio also holds for the ratio of *B. burgdorferi* to *B. microti* in ticks in this study, i.e., 3.8 to 1,” the authors write.

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References:

1. Sanchez-Vicente S, Tagliafierro T, Coleman JL, Benach JL, Tokarz R. Polymicrobial Nature of Tick-Borne Diseases. MBio. 2019 Sep 10;10(5).

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