



by Jamie Anderson - July 31, 2009 –

Washington, July 30: A spike in confirmed cases of the Lyme disease is keeping the local health and federal officials on their toes.

The symptoms of the Lyme disease include bull's-eye-shaped rash, fever and fatigue. The disease can be quickly treated by administering antibiotics. Community meetings are being held in the Fairfax and Loudoun counties, not only to address the concerns raised by the residents but also to share tips on the prevention and treatment of this rare disease.

Increase in budget for disease control

Official sources reveal that the occurrence of the Lyme disease in the Fairfax County has risen to approximately 200 cases a year. The number of cases reported in 2004 was three whereas 82 cases of the Lyme disease were reported in 2006. Officials attribute the spike in cases to better reporting though.

Another area of concern for the CDC is the spike in cases from the Washington region. Loudoun accounts for half of all reported cases in Virginia.

In order to combat the spread of the disease, Rep. Frank R. Wolf had urged the House Appropriations Committee to hike the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Lyme disease budget by close to \$3.6 million. If the request is adhered to, the revised budget would stand at \$9 million.

Jorge Arias, head of Fairfax County's disease-carrying insect program noted, "The number of ticks is so much more than we've seen in the past. It could be the humidity; it could be the moisture; it could be some biological factor out there."

The information advantage

The authorities are equipped to handle the disease as they have access to the information on prevention, control and treatment.

Wolf said, "Lyme is a serious and devastating disease. I am hopeful that through increased education and awareness efforts about the threat of Lyme disease, we can help to ensure people living in high-risk areas know how to protect themselves and their children from ticks."

The Lyme disease is caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the carrier of the disease.

A burgeoning deer population, which act as a transportation agent for the ticks that carry *Borrelia burgdorferi*, has been the major cause of concern for the health authorities of the Fairfax county.

In some areas of the county, the deer density is as high as 400 per square mile. This mammoth deer population is thus a serious health hazard for the local population. It is for this reason that the authorities have initiated culling of the deer at a war footing.

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