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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 18, 2001

TICKBORNE DISEASE AWARENESS WEEK

Westchester County Executive Andrew J. Spano today proclaimed the week of May 20- 26, 2001 as Tickborne Disease Awareness Week.

"Tickborne Disease Awareness Week is designed to encourage residents to learn what they need to know about preventing tickborne diseases, such as Lyme disease and ehrlichiosis, and to take the necessary precautions to prevent these diseases. Last summer I had a tickborne disease, so I now know how important it is to take precautions against tick bites," stated County Executive Andrew J. Spano who contracted ehrlichiosis last summer and is now fully recovered.

"Efforts to heighten public awareness about tickborne illnesses are in full swing," stated Westchester County Health Commissioner Joshua Lipsman, MD, MPH. "Tickborne disease educational materials are being distributed throughout the community and educational presentations are being made to school children and community organizations."

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The most well-known tickborne disease, Lyme disease, is a potentially serious disease caused by a bacterium called a spirochete. The spirochete is passed on to people and domestic animals through the bite of an infected deer tick. The most common symptom is an expanding red rash, typically a bull's-eye rash, often at the site of the tick bite. The rash usually appears three to 30 days after the bite and may last for several weeks. Other symptoms may include fever, sore throat, fatigue, sleeping difficulties, joint and muscle pain, swollen glands and dizziness.

Another tickborne disease, ehrlichiosis, is also spread through the bite of an infected deer tick. Dual infection with both ehrlichiosis and Lyme disease is possible. Symptoms of ehrlichiosis can include fever, headache, chills, malaise, and muscle and joint aches. Low platelet count and low white blood cell count can also occur.

Ticks are most commonly found in grassy or wooded areas. They do not jump or fly, but instead stay low to the ground and grab onto animals and humans that brush up against them. Avoiding tick bites is the best defense against tickborne diseases. To protect yourself from being bitten, always be sure to:

- Make it a habit of doing tick checks at least daily each and every time you and your family return home from enjoying outdoor activities. Inspect the entire body and remove ticks promptly. Ticks usually must be attached and feed for 36-48 hours before transmitting Lyme disease so tick checks and removal at least daily is one of the most effective means of preventing tickborne diseases.
- Avoid tick-infested areas (wooded or grassy areas), especially in May, June and July when nymphal deer ticks are most active.
- Wear light-colored, tightly-woven clothes to spot ticks more easily. Tuck your pants into socks and shirt into pants.

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- Use insect repellents with no more than 30% DEET, but use them sparingly and with care. Products containing 10% or less DEET are recommended for children up to five years of age, but products containing DEET should not be used on infants.
- Carefully read and follow directions on the container and wash treated skin when tick exposure has ended.
- Use landscaping measures around your home or property to make it less attractive for deer and ticks. Consult your local nursery for advice.

For further information on tickborne diseases and their prevention, call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000, or the County's Lyme disease Hotline at (914) 813-LYME.

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