



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Protecting Yourself From the Pests of Summer

PATTY RITCHIE July 20, 2015

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### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

From swimming and hiking to gardening and camping, there's no shortage of ways to enjoy the outdoors during the summer months. However, what many people don't consider is that in warmer weather, bugs like ticks and mosquitoes thrive—and can make a snack out of you if you're not careful.

The effects of these insects can be as pesky as a small bite and in other, more serious cases can be deadly. For example, mosquitoes carrying EEE have the potential to take lives. In Central New York, five human deaths have occurred as a result of EEE since 1971, while dozens of horses have succumbed to the illness throughout the state.

Fortunately, there are ways to stay healthy and keep bugs from “bugging you.” To stay safe from insects and make sure your summer fun continues, be sure to follow the below tips:

***Take advantage of free mosquito-fighting tools:*** Last month, I announced the availability of a free tool to help fight mosquitoes and the spread of the deadly EEE and West Nile viruses. Available on a first come, first serve basis at Soil and Water District offices in Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Oswego, Madison and Onondaga Counties, free larvicide “dunk” treatment kits are placed in standing water—where mosquitoes breed—and help to kill larvae for up to thirty days.

***Get rid of waste tires:*** Waste tires along roadsides and in backyards are not only unsightly, they can be a cause for spreading disease because mosquitoes love to breed in the standing water that collects inside them. In recent years, through my free “Waste Tire Drop Off” events, residents throughout Central and Northern New York have helped to remove more than 30,000 waste tires from area communities. I'll be hosting two more free waste tire disposal events this year, taking place on August 1<sup>st</sup> in Jefferson County

and on August 15<sup>th</sup> in Oswego County. For more information on these events please visit my website at [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov) or call (315) 782-3418.

***Take caution against ticks:*** It's not just mosquitoes that we need to watch out for during the summer. Lyme disease, an infection caused by a bacteria spread by the bite on an infected tick, is particularly prevalent in our area of the state—and that's why we need to take extra caution to protect ourselves from this serious risk. To safeguard yourself from ticks, be sure to take extra caution when in high grass or wooded areas, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts when outdoors and check yourself regularly, paying special attention to your scalp, the backs of knees, behind your ears and your back.

In recent years I've been focused on stopping the spread of diseases carried by insects and making the public more aware of how to stay healthy. My most recent efforts include the following:

- Securing more than a half million dollars in additional State Budget funding—including \$175,000 in the current year's budget—to help fight EEE;
- Sponsoring legislation to create the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Workgroup for Disease Elimination and Reduction,” a special panel of state health experts tasked with pushing for a human vaccine for EEE and other diseases, which met for the first time last month
- Distribution of an educational video on EEE, as well as more than 100,000 educational pamphlets in five years to schools and community organizations.
- Hosting vaccine clinics to protect horses and raise awareness among farmers and horse owners about the dangers of EEE; and
- Serving on the Senate Task Force on Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases, a group which aims to improve the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of Lyme and other related illnesses.

As the summer continues, I hope you'll take the appropriate steps to keep yourself and your loved ones safe from insects and the diseases they carry. For more information and tips for how you can safeguard yourself, please visit my website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).