

# FACT SHEET

## Tick Identification & Lyme Disease Testing

Tests 4015, Referred

### Background

The western black-legged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*) is the only tick species in California that is known to transmit Lyme Disease. Ticks are parasites that are dependent on the blood of humans and animals. If bitten by an infected deer tick, humans and animals can be infected and may develop Lyme Disease, which is caused by a spirochete bacteria called ***Borrelia burgdorferi***.

Deer ticks in the nymph stage are about the size of a poppy seed. Because of their small size, these juvenile ticks are most likely to bite humans and are the main source of transmitting Lyme Disease. Nymphs are primarily active in March-August (Summer). Adult ticks are most commonly found in October through June (Winter/Spring). For the transmission of the Lyme disease spirochete to occur, the tick must remain attached for approximately 24-72 hours.

Ticks that are not known to transmit Lyme Disease include the American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*), the brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*), the Rocky Mountain wood tick (*Dermacentor andersoni*), and the Lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*).

### Tick Identification

The San Luis Obispo County Public Health Laboratory identifies the developmental stage of the tick as well as the tick genus (e.g., *Ixodes*, *Dermacentor*, etc.)

CPT code: 87168

### Tick Lyme Disease Testing

Ticks submitted for Lyme Disease testing will be referred to the Santa Clara County Public Health Laboratory. Lyme Disease testing detects the presence of the spirochete, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, in the gut of the tick using an indirect fluorescent antibody technique. The laboratory report will indicate whether or not the spirochete bacteria was detected. Reports from the test performed by the Santa Clara County Public Health Laboratory normally take a week to ten days and arrive via US Postal Service to the San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory. Copies of the report will then be mailed to you.

### Tick Removal and Payment Information

Please refer to the specimen collection instructions.



County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory  
2191 Johnson Ave., San Luis Obispo, CA 93401  
Phone: (805) 781-5507 Fax: (805) 781-1023 [www.sloPublicHealth.org/lab](http://www.sloPublicHealth.org/lab)  
Laboratory Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 5:00pm