

Tickborne Heartland Virus is Reported in Jackson County in Southern Illinois

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SPRINGFIELD – An older person who resides in a rural area of Jackson County recently tested positive for Heartland Virus, the third reported case in Illinois since 2018, the Illinois Department of Public Health announced today. The first two Heartland virus cases in Illinois were reported in 2018 in Kankakee County and Williamson County. Likely spread by the Lone Star tick, more than 50 cases of Heartland virus disease have been reported in the Midwest and southern United States since 2009.



“As people continue to enjoy summer activities like hiking and camping, it is important to take precautions against ticks,” said IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra. “Remember to wear insect repellent when in tick habitats and check for ticks immediately afterwards.”

Heartland virus was first identified in 2009 when two Missouri farmers who had been bitten by ticks were admitted to a hospital. Almost all individuals with Heartland virus have been hospitalized.

Although most people infected have fully recovered, a few older individuals with medical comorbidities have died. There are no vaccines to prevent Heartland virus infections.

Signs and symptoms of infection are like those of other tickborne diseases and can include fever, headaches, fatigue, muscle aches, and diarrhea. Most people have reported becoming sick about two weeks after being bit by a tick. And while there is no treatment, doctors can treat some of the symptoms. If you have been bitten by a tick and think you may have Heartland virus or another tickborne illness, visit a health care provider. Other tickborne illnesses Illinois residents have been diagnosed with include Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Ehrlichiosis, and tularemia.

Ticks are commonly found on the tips of grasses and shrubs. Ticks crawl—they cannot fly or jump. The tick will wait in the grass or shrub for a person or animal to walk by and then quickly climb aboard. Some ticks will attach quickly, and others will wander, looking for places like the ear, or other areas where the skin is thinner.

The best way to prevent infection with Heartland virus or other tick-borne illnesses is to prevent tick bites. Simple tips to avoid tick bites include:

- Wear light-colored, protective clothing—long-sleeved shirts, pants, boots or sturdy shoes, and a head covering. Treat clothing with products containing 0.5 percent [permethrin](#).
- Apply insect repellent that contains 20 percent or more DEET, picaridin, or IR3535 on exposed skin for protection that lasts several hours.
- Walk in the center of trails so grass, shrubs, and weeds do not brush against you.
- Check yourself, children, other family members, and pets for ticks every two to three hours.
- Remove any tick promptly by grasping it with tweezers, as close to the skin as possible and gently, but firmly, pulling it straight out. Wash your hands and the tick bite site with soap and water.

Additional information about ticks can be found on IDPH's [Tick Surveillance Map](#). A map of the location of Heartland virus cases is also available on the [CDC website](#).