

Another Tickborne Disease: My Experience with Ehrlichiosis

By RUTH CLAUS, '01

Lyme disease is not the only illness carried by ticks. Another tickborne disease is Ehrlichiosis, which is by the Lone Star Tick (*Amblyomma americanum*).



About the size of a watermelon seed, the brown female has a white spot in the middle of its back, and the male has small white spots around its outer edge. These ticks are found throughout the eastern, south-eastern and south-central states, as far north as Maine and as far west as central Texas and Oklahoma.

Ehrlichiosis recently put me in the Intensive Care Unit at Hunterdon Medical Center for a week, followed by another week of general hospital care. Diagnosing this illness was difficult because it presented alarming, seemingly unrelated symptoms such as fever, headache, chills muscle aches, and rash which can be symptoms of many other things. Also, Ehrlichiosis is not frequently seen in New Jersey. However, Hunterdon's doctors met the diagnostic challenge, and a course of antibiotics took care of the infection. One of the best defenses against this disease is vigilant body inspections and removal of ticks after outdoor activities.



Another memorable aspect of this experience was the response of our Master Gardeners. I strongly believe that Master Gardeners are special people, and this experience has reinforced that belief. The positive, encouraging support that was showered upon us helped my husband and me through a very difficult time. We greatly appreciate and thank you for your thoughtfulness.