



## INFORMATION ABOUT TICKS AND LYME'S DISEASE

Dear Parents

Ticks in Belgium could cause Lyme's disease. Lyme's disease is an illness caused by bacteria which live in the gut of some ticks. These ticks are tiny spider like creatures and can be picked up in forests and grassy areas. *Not* every tick carries Lyme's disease and *not* every bite will transmit the disease, even if the tick is infected and not removed. However, it is advisable to remove ticks as soon as possible. You should be aware of the symptoms as this nasty disease is becoming increasingly endemic in Europe. It is advisable for parents of all the children who attended any camp to check their child thoroughly, as soon as they return home. Ticks could be found anywhere, including skin-fold areas such as armpit, groin and scalp.

If a tick is found it should be removed gently but firmly using small tweezers and rotating the tick counter-clockwise as near to the skin as possible. Special tick tweezers can be bought at any pharmacy, if desired. Take care **not** to squeeze the stomach contents into the site of the bite. Ensure that the mouth parts are **not** left behind, however if they are, this does *not* mean that the risk of developing Lyme's disease is increased. Apply a skin disinfectant to the area. It is recommended that a record of the bite site is taken, and the removed tick kept for analysis if required at a later date. (Although this might not always be possible at camp)

The incubation period for this is two months or more. If you don't find a tick but at a later date your child becomes ill, the symptoms to look for are:-

- At the onset, a skin rash on the body which *may* have a white spot in it indicating the site of the bite. This rash starts 3 to 30 days later after being bitten.
- The rash subsides and may go unnoticed.
- Then there is a period of flu like fever, aches, swollen glands, tiredness and shooting pains.
- If not treated, the disease can progress and cause serious health problems.
- The disease can be detected by a blood test and treatment is antibiotics.

To minimise the risk of a tick bite, it is advised to:-

- Wear long trousers with socks tucked in, and long sleeved shirts.
- Check for ticks regularly
- Wear insect repellent on clothing

We regret having to bring this to your attention but it is better to warn you than risk this still relatively unrecognised disease going untreated.

With best wishes,

## The Leaders

1<sup>st</sup> Brussels (British) Scout Group