September 22, 2015

Dear Colleague:

Tickborne diseases, in particular Lyme disease (caused by the spirochete _Borellia burgdorfi)_, continue to receive attention from media, focus groups and healthcare providers at both the state and national levels. Alabama currently has seven counties that are considered endemic for Lyme disease: **Calhoun, Chambers, Jefferson, Mobile, Shelby, Russell and Tuscaloosa**. In order for a county to be considered endemic, there must have been at least two confirmed cases identified within the county.

Beginning in 2011, ADPH Lyme disease case counts have increased dramatically from the previous four years. It remains unclear how much of the increase is due to disease transmission, changes in diagnostic testing, or changes in the case definition that determines how cases are counted (e.g. suspect, probable, and confirmed).

Lyme disease was once considered not to exist in Alabama, and it was believed that a positive case was acquired from outside the state. Today, Lyme disease should be considered in anyone with appropriate clinical symptoms, with or without known exposure to a tick bite or travel out of state. This applies statewide, not just for the seven endemic counties.

Symptoms and clinical signs of Lyme disease, much like many other tickborne infections, may vary but can include malaise, fever, fatigue, stiffness, myalgia, and lymphadenopathy. In approximately 70 to 80 percent of infected people, a characteristic _erythema migrans_ rash will be the first manifestation. This is commonly referred to as a target or "bulls-eye," occurring as singular or multiple lesions. Not all patients develop the _erythema migrans_ rash.

For more information on Lyme Disease, including transmission, signs and symptoms, diagnosis and testing, and treatment, visit CDC.gov or contact the ADPH Division of Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks at (800) 338-8374 or (334) 206-5971.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Williamson, M.D.
State Health Officer

DEW/LF