
Acadia's Lyme disease incidence is low

● The number of infected ticks seems to be 'extremely low' but there is a chance of infection.

From staff reports

SOUTH PORTLAND — The number of ticks in Acadia National Park that are infected with the organism that causes Lyme disease seems to be "extremely low," according to a biologist who is conducting an ongoing study there.

But people should still be reminded that there is a chance of being bitten by an infected tick while they are enjoying the park, Judith L. Hazen-Connery said at a conference on Lyme disease Friday.

Lyme disease is transmitted through the bite of deer ticks infected with spiral-shaped bacteria called spirochetes.

The illness begins with flu-like symptoms, but can progress to painful and chronic arthritis, neurologi-

cal problems and heart damage.

Biologists Hazen-Connery and Allan F. O'Connell Jr. set up survey areas in the national park to capture ticks and small mammals that serve as hosts for the ticks.

After the ticks are captured, they are sent to Maine Medical Center in Portland, where researchers examine them to see if they are infected with the disease-causing spirochete.

The information gathered in the study, Hazen-Connery said, will be used to evaluate the risk to park visitors of getting Lyme disease.