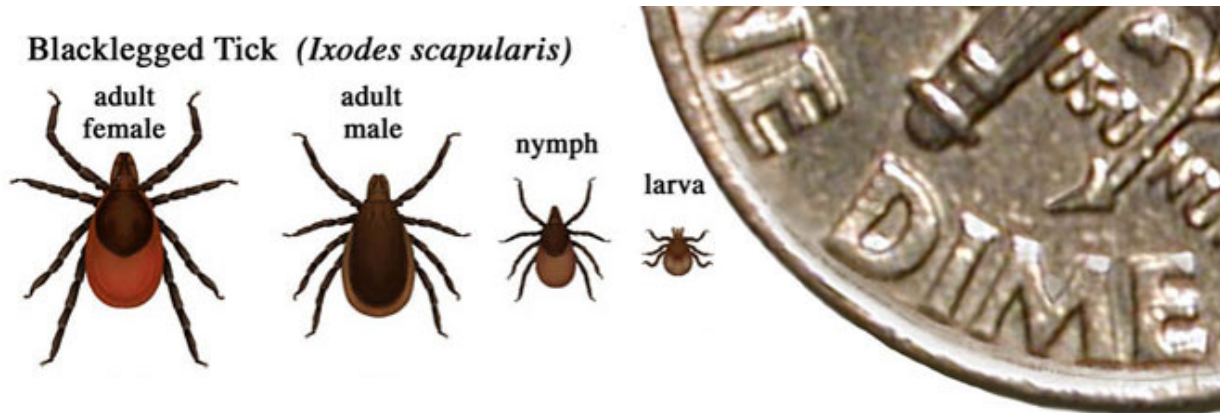
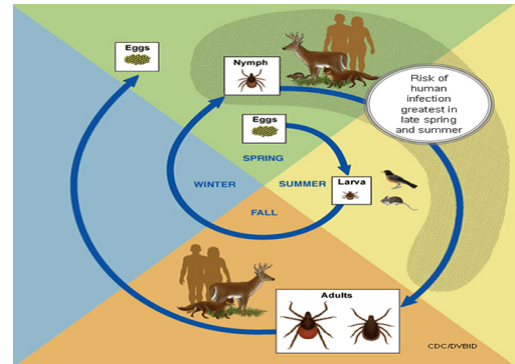


Black-legged Tick Biology

Ticks are medically important arthropods found throughout New Jersey. They are exclusively parasitic and feed on vertebrate blood. Ticks do not fly or jump, they generally rest on the tips of grasses and shrubs with their upper legs extended waiting for a host to pass by that they can climb on. This is known as questing.

The Black-legged tick, *Ixodes scapularis*, is what is known as a three host tick feeding at each growth stage (larva, nymph and adult). It requires a vertebrate blood meal at each stage where it will feed, detach, drop into the leaf litter and molt to the next stage. This growth cycle takes two years to complete. It is interesting to note that while normally a tick has eight legs, only six are present during the larval stage.

Black-legged ticks feed upon a variety of hosts depending upon where they are in the growth stage. Adults tend to feed upon large mammals (White-tailed Deer, Black Bears, Humans, and others). Larval and nymphal stage ticks do feed on larger mammals but prefer smaller species such as white footed mice.



Black-legged ticks do transmit various disease causing agents including the bacterium that causes Lyme disease. Generally ticks need to be attached to the host for 24 hours before transmission does occur so it is important to check for ticks after every outing in order to reduce your chances of getting Lyme. Avoidance of their habitat also goes a long way as does wearing an EPA approved repellent in minimizing their impact on your outdoor enjoyment.

Reference: www.tickcounter.org
www.co.monmouth.nj.us
www.cdc.gov

