# Managing tick-related risk in outdoor environments

Negar Elmieh, MPH, PhD NCCEH Webinar May 31, 2023



National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health

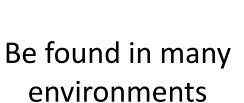
## Setting the stage. Ticks can...



Be found in many environments

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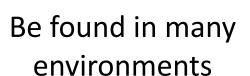




Can infect humans with pathogens

## Setting the stage. Ticks can...





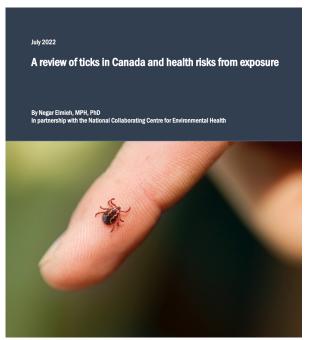


Can infect humans with pathogens

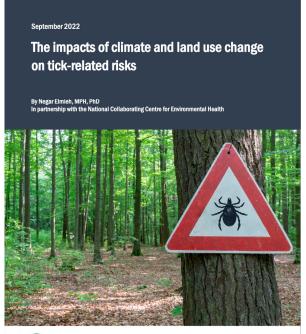


Survive and thrive across Canada

## How can we design and manage parks, recreational areas, and residential properties to reduce tick-related risks?







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## Poll Question

What is your field of practice/profession?

July 2022

#### A review of ticks in Canada and health risks from exposure

By Negar Elmieh, MPH, PhD
In partnership with the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health



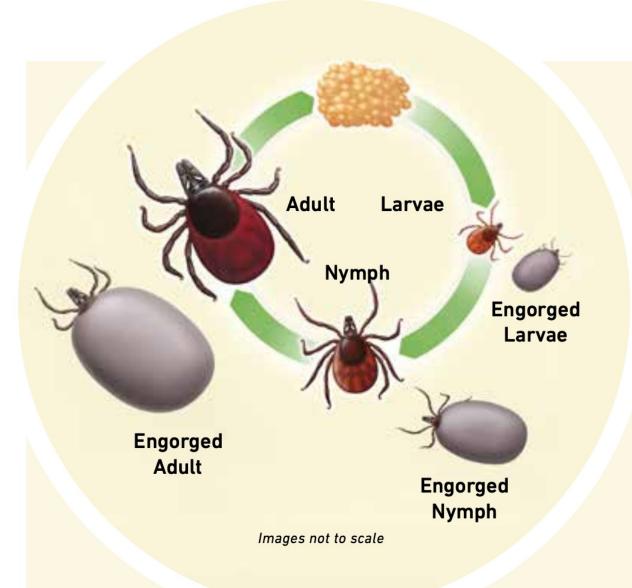
## Evidence review # 1

(synthesis of 92 literature sources)



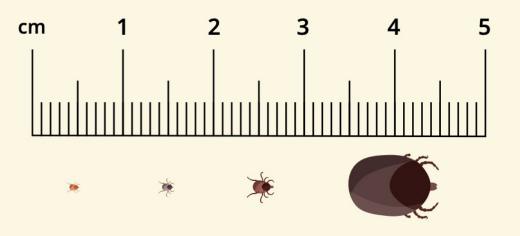
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#### TICK LIFE CYCLE AND HABITAT



Ticks are small arthropods. They are slow moving and their bodies have a flat tear drop shape. They go through 3 life stages:

Larvae | 6-legged, become engorged after feedingNymph | 8-legged, become engorged after feedingAdult | 8-legged, become engorged after feeding



Larvae

Nymph

Adult

Engorged Adult shown at 1.5x actual size

## Poll Question

What environments are ticks commonly found in across Canada?

SPECIES / COMMON NAME	TYPICAL RANGE*	HABITAT PREFERENCES
<i>Ixodes scapularis</i> Blacklegged tick	East of Rocky Mountains	Prefer high moisture areas; often found in leaf litter and under forest canopy.
<i>Ixodes pacificus</i> Western blacklegged tick	West of Rocky Mountains	

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Amblyomma americanum Lone Star	Canada wide	Often found in wooded areas and leaf litter.

<sup>\*</sup>Typical range is represented by research available as of 2023. Surveillance is limited in many areas and this information could be an underrepresentation of the actual presence of ticks in a particular area.

## Common and new landscapes



## Common and new landscapes





## Common and new landscapes







# Overview of tick vectors and pathogens

	Pathogen	Primary tick vector(s)	Geographic range	Nationally reportable	Estimated incidence (per 100,000 population)
	Analplasma phagocytophilum	Ixodes scapularis Ixodes pacificus Ixodes spinipalpis	BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, QC, NB, NL NS, PEI	No	1.54 in 2018 (Manitoba) <sup>22</sup>
	Borrelia burgdorferi	Ixodes scapularis Ixodes pacificus	BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, QC, NB, NS, NL, PEI	Yes	7.0 in 2019 <sup>23</sup>
	Borrelia hermsii	Ornithodoros hermsi	ВС	No	-
	Borrelia mayonii	Ixodes scapularis Ixodes angustus	BC, ON	No	-
Bacteria	Borrelia miyamotoi	Ixodes scapularis Ixodes pacificus	BC, AB, MB, ON, QC, NC, NS, NL, PEI	No	-
	Rocky Mountain spotted fever (Rickettsia rickettsia)	Dermacentor variabilis Dermacentor andersoni Rhipicephalus sanguineus	BC, AB, SK, ON, NS	No	0.2 in 2019 (British Columbia) <sup>24</sup>
	Tularemia ( <i>Francisella tularenis</i> )	Dermacentor variabilis Dermacentor andersoni Amblyomma americanum	Canada wide	Yes	0 in 2022 <sup>24</sup>
Parasite	Babesia	Ixodes scapularis Ixodes angustus	BC, MB, ON, QC, NC, NS	No	0.9 in 2019 (United States) <sup>25</sup>
Virus	Powassan virus	Ixodes cookei Ixodes marxi Ixodes spinipalpis Ixodes scapularis Dermacentor andersoni	MB, ON, QC, NB, NS, PEI	No	-

Adapted from Bouchard et al, 2019

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Adapted from Bouchard et al, 2019

## Early diagnosis and prompt treatment key

#### Challenges:

- Non-specificity of tick-borne infections
- Potential for co-infections with more than one pathogen
- Many people unfamiliar with risks

#### Populations at risk of complications

- Immunocompromised
- Older adults
- Pregnancy and cheestfeeding due to limited treatment options

Risk of human exposure

Risk of human exposure

 $\propto$ 

amount of time spent outdoors in tick habitats

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 $\propto$ 

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Tall grass
Brush/shrubs
Leaf litter

Risk of human exposure

 $\propto$ 

amount of time spent outdoors in tick habitats

Children 5-14

**Adults 55-79** 

Males

Tall grass
Brush/shrubs
Leaf litter

#### Activities that can increase risk

#### **RECREATIONAL**

Hiking
Fishing
Hunting
Camping
Golfing

#### **DAILY**

Gardening
Walking your dog
Playing outside

#### **OCCUPATIONAL**

Landscaping Tree planting

**SEASONAL ASPECTS:** Ticks most active between spring and late autumn

#### **BE PREPARED WHEN OUTDOORS**

#### Take action: minimize your risk of tick encounters

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#### **Outdoor** Avoid high-risk areas with high grass and leaf litter. Walk on cleared trails. Wear light-coloured clothing covering arms and legs (to easily spot ticks on clothing). Tuck clothing (e.g. pants into socks, shirt into pants). Wear closed-toed shoes to create a barrier for skin. Conduct regular checks for crawling ticks. Apply insect repellents approved in Canada.\* Wear permethrin-treated clothing. In Canada, this is approved for those over the age of 16. Permethrin sprays and liquids for treating

one's own clothes are not approved in Canada.

#### **Returning indoors**

Check clothing and gear for unattached ticks.
Change from your outdoor clothes and put them in the dryer, on high heat, for at least 10 minutes to kill ticks.
Take a shower/bath to rinse unattached ticks.
Thoroughly check yourself and pets for tick(s) You should check your whole body as ticks can attach anywhere.
Pay close attention to your head, hairline, behind your ears, waist, belly button, between the legs, and behind your knees. A hand-held mirror is helpful to see all body parts.
Promptly remove tick(s) using a fine point tweezer, grasping ticks neck at a 90-degree angle. Wash the area with soap and water.

Keep tick in a jar with moist cotton ball,

submit to your health provider for testing. See

this instructional video: shorturl.at/hmrJK

## Poll Question

Have you personally taken action to minimize your risk of tick encounters?

September 2022

## The impacts of climate and land use change on tick-related risks

By Negar Elmieh, MPH, PhD
In partnership with the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health





ncceh.ca

## Evidence review # 2

(synthesis of 85 literature sources)

Temperature

Humidity

Precipitation

Extreme weather events

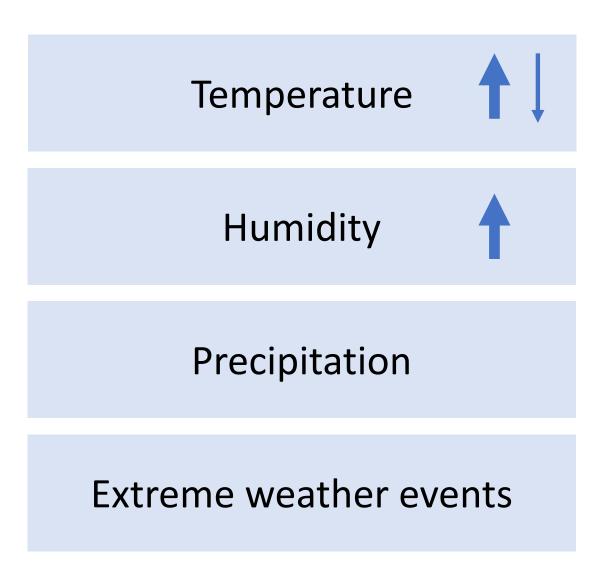
Temperature

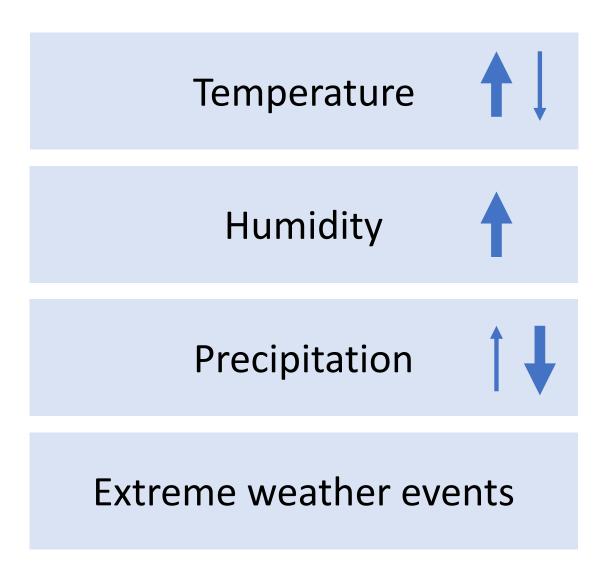


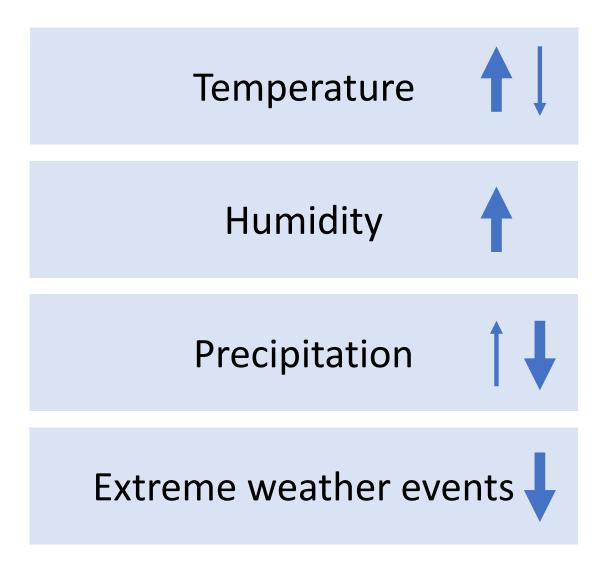
Humidity

Precipitation

Extreme weather events







## Poll Question

Of the climate variables, which do you think is the most important predictor of tick population establishment?

Climate variables: temperature, humidity, precipitation, extreme weather events

**Temperature** Humidity Precipitation Extreme weather events

Host population

Predator prey dynamics

Land use changes

Human behaviour

## Land use changes in urban, suburban, and rural areas are increasing suitable tick habitats



Housing development in forested areas



Landscaping



Playgrounds



Green spaces

## Forest Fragmentation

- 1. ↑ density of deer populations
- 2. ↓ species diversity
- 3. ↑ potential human exposure to ticks



#### **March 2023**

## Review of environmental management strategies to reduce tick populations

By Negar Elmieh, MPH, PhD
In partnership with the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health



# National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health Centre de collaboration nationale en santé environnementale

### ncceh.ca

## Evidence review # 3

(synthesis of 106 literature sources)

### What we know:

- Ticks can be found in many environments across urban, suburban, and recreational areas
- Common challenge: Many visitors to parks and recreational areas are not from the geographical area and potentially unfamiliar with risks

## Question

 How best to manage ticks in outdoor environments, across scales, to limit tick related risks?

### Landscape design considerations

- Create clear pathways. Use hardscaping materials such as gravel, stones, bare soil, and cedar chips or sawdust to create a path or to delineate a border at least 3 inches wide. Research shows that woodchip borders along trails effectively suppress Ixodes scapularis activity.
- Select plants to limit deer and/or rodents. This may also increase insect biodiversity limiting ticks. Consider ornamental deer and rodent resistant plants (e.g. lavender, rosemary, pennyroyal, daffodil, iris, Russian sage). Plant selection will vary according to climate. A landscape specialist can be consulted to guide regional plant selection and their placement.
- Increase sun exposure and decrease humidity through landscape design principals. This can help to reduce tick survival since sun exposure and limited humidity can dessicate ticks.
- Use fencing where possible to limit deer and other host animal movement throughout the landscape. This reduces the risk of ticks becoming dispersed in an environment through animal hosts.
- Prune plants regularly (e.g., trees, shrubs, and bushes).
- 6 Maintain lawn by keeping grass short.
- Remove yard waste such as leaf litter, brush/log piles, weeds, and debris.
- 8 Stack wood neatly in dry area away from the house or other buildings.
- Move seating and play structures into open areas at least 3 yards away from landscape perimeter. Mark area with a 3 inch woodchip border.

# Insecticides as a last resort:

- Chemical measures

   (acaricides, pyrethroids, and permethrin) can be used to complement landscape design and management to limit tick populations in certain areas.
- Consult a certified pest management specialist to see if your park, recreational area, or property is a good candidate for chemical measures.

### Landscape design considerations

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Poll Question In your personal or professional life, do you foresee yourself implementing these landscape design considerations to reduce the risk of ticks?

## So what can we do?

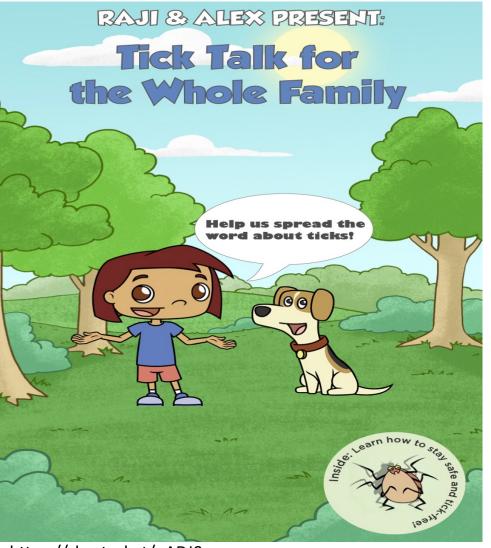
Design and manage outdoor environments to minimize risk

Support and fund research and surveillance efforts

Support policies and land use practices that minimize tick related risks

Risk communication

## Risk communication through web and visual media





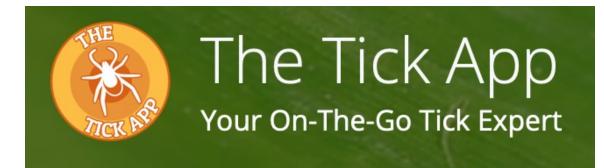


https://shorturl.at/ckCUZ

WEES NIET GEK.
DOE DE TEKENCHECK.



https://www.tekenbeten.be



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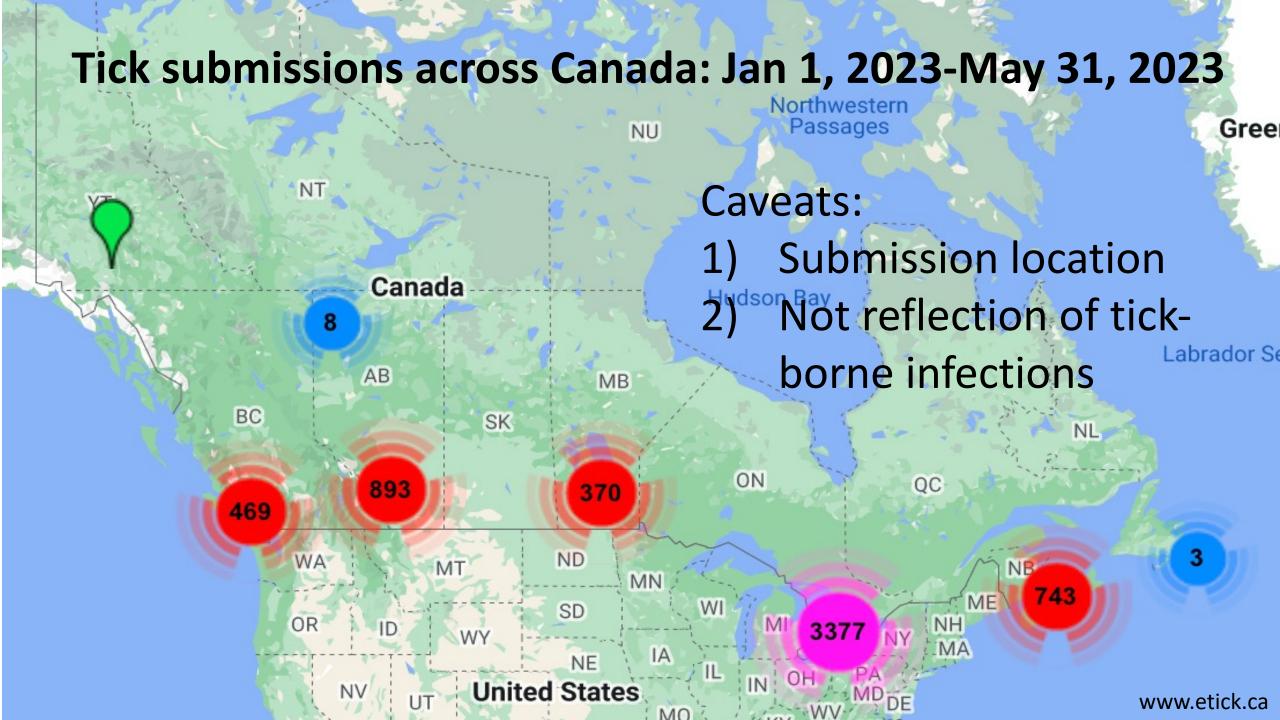
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### Be a citizen scientist!

photo with date and location to www.etick.ca for nocost identification by a professional. This helps to map tick species to a geographical area and time of year and track changes over time.







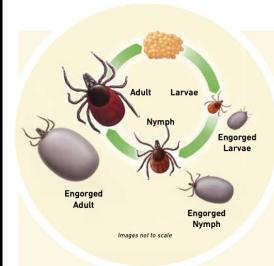
How to create effective signs to increase awareness?



#### **FAST FACTS**

- Ticks can be found in many environments, but are commonly found in wooded areas with leaf litter, tall grassy areas, shrub layers and along forest edges.
- Ticks can infect humans with pathogens that can lead to illnesses such as Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, and Babesiosis, among others.
- The number of places where ticks can survive and thrive in Canada is growing due to climate change, animal migration, deforestation and urbanization.
- Landscapes can be designed and managed to minimize tick and animal host (e.g., deer and rodents) habitats.

#### **TICK LIFE CYCLE AND HABITAT**



Ticks are small arthropods. They are slow moving and their bodies have a flat tear drop shape. They go through 3 life stages:

Larvae | 6-legged, become engorged after feeding Nymph | 8-legged, become engorged after feeding Adult | 8-legged, become engorged after feeding



Adult

shown at 1.5x actual size

#### Tick species and habitats

SPECIES / COMMON NAME	TYPICAL RANGE*	HABITAT PREFERENCES
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<sup>\*</sup> This table represents available research as of 2023. Surveillance is limited in many areas and this information could be an underrepresentation of the actual presence of tick species in a particular area. The range of tick species will also change with climate change.

#### The range of ticks is expanding

- It is estimated that the range of ticks will expand northwards by 35-55 km per year.
- Increasing ambient temperature and high relative humidity can increase tick population and activity.





#### LANDSCAPE DESIGN TO MINIMIZE TICK HABITAT SUITABILITY



#### Landscape design considerations

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#### Insecticides as a last resort:

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- · Consult a certified pest management specialist to see if your park, recreational area, or property is a good candidate for chemical measures.



#### **BE PREPARED WHEN OUTDOORS**

#### Take action: minimize your risk of tick encounters

#### Outdoor

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- ☐ Wear light-coloured clothing covering arms and legs (to easily spot ticks on clothing).
- Tuck clothing (e.g. pants into socks, shirt into pants).
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- $\hfill \Box$  Conduct regular checks for crawling ticks.
- □ Apply insect repellents approved in Canada.\*
- Wear permethrin-treated clothing. In Canada, this is approved for those over the age of 16.
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#### Returning indoors

- Check clothing and gear for unattached ticks.
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- Keep tick in a jar with moist cotton ball, submit to your health provider for testing. See this instructional video: shorturl.at/hmrJK

#### \* INSECT REPELLENTS APPROVED IN CANADA

As of 2023, there are two approved personal insect repellents: DEET and Icaridin.

#### DEET

The approved concentration varies according to age:

< 6 months	Not recommended for infants under 6 months, use mosquito net instead
6 months – 2 years	10% DEET once a day.
2 – 12 years	10% DEET up to three times a day
> 12 years of age	30% DEET

#### Icaridi

Products containing up to 20% icaridin (also know as picaridin) are safe for children 6 months and older.

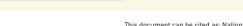
National Collaborating Centre

for Environmental Health

Centre de collaboration nationale en santé environnementale

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photo with date and location
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Scan the QR for more information about this project.

This document can be cited as: National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health. Ticks in a changing environment [fact sheet]. Vancouver, BC: NCCEH; 2023 May. Available from: https://shorturl.at/fixQR

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- Landscapes can be designed and managed to minimize tick and animal host (e.g., deer and rodents) habitats.

# Thank you...

Dr. Leah Rosenkrantz

Dr. Anne-Marie Nicol

Dr. Lydia Ma

Dr. Sarah Henderson

Michele Wiens

## Questions

Contact info:

nelmieh@gmail.com

**Project website:** https://ncceh.ca/environmental-health-in-canada/health-agency-projects/managing-tick-related-risks-outdoor