



Texas Lyme Disease Association President Harriet Bishop explained ticks and the risk of infection at the Bulverde Senior Center last week.

TLDA Board President talks ticks and Lyme disease

**STORY AND PHOTO BY CAROLINE TURNEY
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Texas Lyme Disease Association Board President Harriet Bishop told an audience at the Bulverde Senior Center last week that up to 50% of ticks in the Hill Country may be infected with Lyme.

She began by stating that the first identified case of Lyme disease in Texas occurred in 1984. According to Bishop, all 11 public health regions have patients with Lyme.

A Lyme patient herself, Bishop said "I'm not a doctor. I can't diagnose anybody, but I can tell my own story." After being diagnosed with Lyme, Bishop said she underwent 2.5 years of steady antibiotics.

In her estimation, Lyme can often be mistaken for Alzheimer's disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, irritable bowel syndrome, or hypochondrias. Bishop said a blood test is the only way to know for certain if Lyme is the cause for a continual sense of "I just feel rotten."

Bishop explained that getting a tick off within 24 to 36 hours is important because many of the unhealthy organisms from the tick's digestive system spill into the blood in that time frame. Experts, she said, recommend putting slowly and steadily with tweezers until the tick releases while taking care not to lose the head in the skin.

Bishop said the Texas Department of Health will analyze a tick to see if it is diseased. She recommended placing the tick in a zipper plastic bag. "Get that tick off in a hurry," she concluded.

On November 3 at Rocky Hill Ranch in Smithville, Texas, the Greater Houston Biking Association will be hosting the Fat Tire Festival and Lyme Ride which Bishop said is the nation's first Lyme disease awareness bicycle ride. For more information, log onto <http://www.ghorba.org> or www.txlda.org.