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For Immediate Release

**PREPARING FOR LYME DISEASE SEASON:
*Get set for spring — and keep your family safe***

Greenwich, CT, March 2008 – With spring just around the corner, most of us are looking forward to spending more time outdoors — not to the threat caused by disease-spreading parasites. But April marks the official start of tick season, and ticks are the most common carriers of the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.

“Although Lyme disease is a year-round problem, ticks are most active in the spring and early summer,” says Debbie Siciliano, co-president and co-founder of Time for Lyme, Inc. (timeforlyme.org), a research, education and advocacy network and affiliate of the Lyme Disease Association, which together have endowed the Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Research Center at Columbia University Medical in New York City, the first of its kind dedicated to the study of chronic Lyme disease. “And unfortunately, these ticks are often found in private backyards and gardens — just the places where many of us want to be come springtime.”

Cases of Lyme disease have been reported in virtually every state, although the Northeastern, Great Lakes, and Pacific Northwest areas are particularly troublesome. “If you live or vacation in these places, you’re more likely to meet up with an infected tick,” Siciliano says. “You’re also more vulnerable if you like to hike in wooded or grassy areas — places where ticks thrive.”

To get ready for Lyme season, Siciliano recommends controlling the ticks around your home, then taking steps to protect yourself and your family. Here are some steps to consider:

Use Pesticides

A pesticide designed to kill ticks, called an acaricide, can make a big dent in tick populations. In fact, a single, well-timed application can reduce tick populations by 68 to 100%, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Environmental Protection Agency and individual states determine the legal use of pesticides, so check with your local authorities, and talk with local health officials about the best time to apply acaricide. You also can hire a professional to apply pesticides around your home to reduce the tick population.

Banish the Bugs

Beyond the chemicals, you can use landscaping techniques to create a tick-safe zone around your house. “Ticks thrive in humid, wooded areas, but they don’t last long in sunny, dry environments,” Siciliano says. To keep them away from your home, prune trees and shrubs, clear away leaf litter, brush and tall grass, and let your lawn dry between waterings. Get rid of mulch beds and keep firewood stacked in a dry place. And put down a strip of wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas to prevent ticks from moving in.

Discourage Deer

Sure, they’re cute, but deer can carry some nasty stowaways, Siciliano says. They typically carry the adult female ticks that can drop off and lay thousands of eggs on your property. So don’t feed them on your property, and put up a fence or barrier to keep them off your yard. Get rid of the birdfeeders — or at least be sure to clean up any spilled birdfeed before it attracts deer. You also can add deer-resistant plants to your garden (talk to the experts at your local nursery for suggestions).

Mind the Mice

Deer ticks also love to settle on mice and other rodents, so you might consider taking steps to control them there, too. Bait boxes, such as the Maxforce Tick Management System and Damminix Tick Tubes, treat wild rodents with acaricide and have been shown to reduce ticks around homes by more than 50 percent. The treatment is similar to products used to control fleas and ticks on pets; it doesn’t harm the mouse, just the ticks, although you should use caution, as you would with any other chemicals, and store the product where the dogs and kids can’t reach it.

Protect Your Pets

Cats and dogs that venture outside can pick up ticks and bring them home to you, says Siciliano. Schedule an appointment now to talk to your veterinarian about appropriate tick repellants (Frontline and Top Spot are two popular options), and get into the habit of checking Fido or Fluffy for ticks every time he comes inside. "The Lyme-carrying ticks can be as small as a poppy seed, so you've got to be especially careful when checking a furry dog or cat," Siciliano says. "Using appropriate veterinary tick repellants makes it much less likely that your pet will bring ticks home."

Stock Up

Before April rolls around, consider stocking your medicine cabinet with the tick repellant and insecticide products you'll use to protect yourself and your family, Siciliano says. You'll want an insect repellent containing 20 to 30 percent DEET, which you'll apply to exposed skin and clothing (check with your doctor about the appropriate use of DEET). CDC recommends products containing active ingredients which have been registered with US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for use as insect repellents on skin or clothing. You'll also want to buy a product containing permethrin, an insecticide that you apply to clothing. "Remember that DEET is a repellant, so it won't kill the ticks," Siciliano says. "Permethrin kills ticks on your clothing, but it won't have any effect on bugs that don't land on your clothes," Siciliano says. "That's why it's best to keep both permethrin and DEET products on hand and use them together."

About Time for Lyme

Time For Lyme is an organization dedicated to eliminating the devastating effects of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illness. Our mission is to prevent the spread of disease, develop definitive diagnostic tools and effective treatments, and to ultimately find a cure for tick-borne illness by supporting research, education, and the acquisition and dissemination of information. In addition, we will continue to act as advocates for Lyme disease sufferers and their families through support of legislative reform on the federal, state and local levels. For more information on our organization, please visit www.timeforlyme.org.