



## Tick Surveillance Scheme – guidance

[www.gov.uk/guidance/tick-surveillance-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/tick-surveillance-scheme)

The Tick Surveillance Scheme (TSS), set up by Public Health England (PHE) in 2005, is the only scheme that records tick distributions on a national scale.

Tick specimens sent to us are identified and provide us with valuable information on the distribution of the various species present across the United Kingdom (UK), their seasonal activity and their host associations.

The main aims of the surveillance scheme are to:

- promote the surveillance of ticks in the UK
- monitor tick distribution and seasonality on a nationwide scale
- determine the diversity of ticks commonly infesting humans and animals
- detect non-native (imported) or rare UK tick species

All records are available via the [National Biodiversity Network \(NBN\)](#) gateway for research and public use.

### How to take part

Individuals and groups are invited to send in any ticks collected, along with the completed recording form available from our website: [www.gov.uk/guidance/tick-surveillance-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/tick-surveillance-scheme).

Each tick must be accompanied by a recording form and must include the date and location of collection and the host from which the tick was removed. If you provide us with your email address, we will notify you with the results of the identification.

If ticks are collected from different hosts or locations, please place these in separate containers and fill out a recording form for each container posted. Ticks collected from the same host on the same day may be sent in one container. To prevent deterioration of the ticks, place them in a fridge or cool, dark place and post as soon as possible.



## Testing ticks

PHE does not routinely test individual ticks for pathogens (such as the bacteria that cause Lyme borreliosis). Some sources of alternative health advice recommend testing ticks after removal for evidence of *Borrelia* bacteria and commercial companies are starting to offer tick-testing services. The results of such tests should not be used to inform diagnosis or treatment. A positive result does not mean that the infected tick will have passed on the bacteria – there are many factors that determine whether Lyme disease results from a bite from an infected tick. A negative result may not be technically valid and could give false assurance, and it does not exclude the possibility that another tick elsewhere on the body has been missed.

If you become unwell following a tick bite or develop a red and spreading circular rash at the bite site, you should talk to your GP who can advise you further. Your GP may then send a clinical sample to the PHE Lyme reference laboratory for Lyme borreliosis testing. More information on Lyme borreliosis symptoms, diagnosis and incidence, can be found on PHE's [Lyme disease pages](#) or [NHS.UK](#). If you still wish to send us the tick, this will allow us to record which species you have been bitten by. This helps PHE understand where and when members of the public are exposed to ticks and helps to inform our key public health messages.

## Instructions on how to safely remove ticks

1. Using a pair of **fine-tipped** forceps or tweezers, or tick removal hooks (do not use fingers), grip the tick as close to the point of attachment on the skin as possible.
2. Gently apply pressure and pull steadily upwards, without twisting and taking care not to crush the tick.
3. Place the tick/s in a plastic container, ensuring the lid is securely fastened.
4. Wash hands after tick removal and label the container so that the accompanying details recorded can be identified.
5. Place sealed container in an envelope and post to the address below.

**Should you develop any symptoms of illness (rash, fever, flu-like symptoms) following tick removal, please seek advice from your GP.**

## How to send ticks

Please send any ticks collected in a crush-proof, plastic container (plastic vials can be supplied on request) along with the details outlined above to:

Tick Surveillance Scheme  
Public Health England  
Porton Down  
Salisbury  
SP4 0JG

The Royal Mail requests that live specimens are carefully packaged so that there is no danger of the ticks escaping or posing any risk to mail handling staff if the package becomes damaged during transit.

Live ticks must be sent using a first class service. Dead specimens can be sent using first or second class. Please use the screw-top plastic containers provided or ensure that other plastic containers are securely fastened. Please post the container in a padded envelope with a visible return address and mark the package as 'Urgent – live creatures'.

## Postage costs

Unfortunately, we are not able to cover the cost of postage, however we can provide you with plastic tubes and envelopes on request. Please email us at [tick@phe.gov.uk](mailto:tick@phe.gov.uk) or put a note on your recording form.

It should cost approximately £1 to send a tick into the TSS if you use the supplied materials. Depending on how many ticks you are sending or the size of the tubes you are sending them in, the cost of postage may vary. Below are some suggested shipping methods via Royal Mail. See [www.postoffice.co.uk/price-finder](http://www.postoffice.co.uk/price-finder) for the latest prices.

**Large letter** (max thickness 2.5cm, max 100g) – our usual vials in small padded envelope will fit this category.

**Small parcel** (max thickness 16cm) – larger containers, for example universal tubes used by vets, will need to go in these.

'Signed for' and 'next day' delivery is considerably more expensive. It is not necessary to post specimens using these services.

If you are submitting many samples, you can group them in envelopes to save postage, providing that each sample is placed in a separate container with separate recording forms attached.

## How will my information be stored/used in the future?

The data you provide on this form will be kept confidential and anonymous in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation.

We will store your name and contact details (section 3) in case we need to follow up with a specific query relating to your tick record. By submitting this form, you agree that your name, contact details (postal address, email address and/or telephone number) will be held on a database so that you may be contacted.

By completing sections 1 to 3, we understand that you are consenting only to receive feedback on the identification of your specimen, and you are under no obligation to take part in any future studies. Your contact information will not be made available to anyone else. Only the research team will have access to your information which will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Signing the form is optional and any advice given will not be affected. By signing the form, you give your consent to be contacted by Public Health England for future research. You may be invited to participate in research into the understanding of ticks and tick-borne diseases.

Once your data has been analysed, it may be used in publications in academic journals and reports. It may be presented to a variety of academic and professional audiences but you will not be identified. By submitting this form, you agree that the information and tick specimens may be anonymously used for research purposes.

If you wish to have your data deleted for any reason, please contact the researchers and, wherever possible, your request will be obliged.

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