



# COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

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www.sloPublicHealth.org/Lab

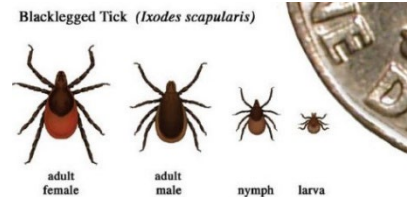
## SPECIMEN COLLECTION & TRANSPORT INSTRUCTIONS

### Tick Collection & Lyme Disease Testing

#### TICK DESCRIPTION

The western black-legged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*) is the only tick species in California that is known to transmit Lyme Disease. If bitten by an infected tick, humans and animals can be infected and may develop Lyme Disease, which is caused by a spiral-shaped (spirochete) bacteria called ***Borrelia burgdorferi***.

Ticks in the nymph stage are about the size of a poppy seed and are most likely to bite humans and transmit Lyme Disease. **Nymphs** are primarily active in March to August (Summer). **Adult ticks** are most-commonly found in October to June (Winter/Spring). According to research, the tick must remain attached for approximately 36-48 hours before the Lyme disease bacteria is transmitted. **If you are unable to identify the tick, do not hesitate to submit it for testing.**



#### ACCEPTABLE SPECIMENS

1. Whole, intact tick that is not dried out (desiccated)

#### SPECIMEN COLLECTION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Remove tick immediately after seeing it.
2. Do not squash the tick; bacteria released in fluids may penetrate the skin.
3. If possible, have someone else remove the tick from you.
4. Use tweezers or forceps, not your fingers.
5. If you must touch the tick, use a tissue to protect your hand.
6. Using tweezers, grasp the tick's mouth parts as close to the skin as possible.
7. Gently pull the tick straight out, steadily, and firmly.
8. Do not twist or jerk the tick. *If the mouth parts of the tick break off and remain in the skin, consult a Physician.*
9. Clean the wound with soap and water.

#### SPECIMEN STORAGE

1. Place the whole tick in a small sealed Ziplock bag or a clean plastic jar with a lid.
2. Add a piece of paper towel or tissue (not toilet paper) that is moistened with water to the container if you are not able to bring the tick in within 48 hours.

#### REJECTION CRITERIA

1. A tick that is **dried out, a tick in alcohol or bleach, head and body parts missing, crushed, or damaged** such that the condition of the tick make it unusable to be identified and/or unacceptable for testing.
  - a. Note: A tick that is dried out is acceptable for identification but not Lyme Disease testing.

#### SPECIMEN SUBMISSION

1. Bring the tick specimen to the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Laboratory at 2191 Johnson Ave, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401.

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## Tick Collection & Lyme Disease Testing

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### TYPES OF TESTING

1. Tick identification: Identifies the developmental stage and genus of the tick.
  - a. Make a check out to: **SLO County Public Health Laboratory for \$38 (7/2025-6/2026).**
2. Tick Lyme Disease Testing: Detects the *Borrelia burgdorferi* spirochete in the gut of the tick.
  - a. Make a checkout to: **Santa Clara County Public Health Laboratory for \$40.25 (7/2025-6/2026).**
  - b. Note: Price subject to change; please call to confirm current price.

### INFORMATION ON REPORTING

Reports from the test performed by the Santa Clara Public Health Laboratory normally take a week to ten days and arrive via US Postal Service to the San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory. Copies of the report will be mailed to you.