Got a Tick? Submit a Pic!

In Michigan, ticks may carry diseases that cause illness in humans and animals. If you find a tick, you may want it identified. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) can identify a tick if you send a photo.

Michigan's five most common ticks can be seen here. Not all ticks or tick species carry disease agents. MDHHS provides tick identification at no charge to Michigan citizens. For more information about ticks and tick-borne diseases, see our "Ticks and Your Health" brochure.

In many cases, ticks can be quickly and accurately identified from a decent photo. However, definitive tick identification can only be made using MDHHS Citizen Submitted Tick Program.

Instructions for Taking a Tick Photo:

1. In a well-lit area, place the tick on a plain white (or light-colored) surface with its back facing up.
2. If the tick is flat, point the camera straight down at the tick as close as possible while remaining in focus. If the tick is engorged (swollen with blood), you may need to angle the camera to best show the shield-like body part (scutum) behind the head. Resting the camera or your hand against a stationary surface may help you keep the camera still and keep the image in focus.
3. Take a picture of the tick.
4. Flip the tick over so that it is now belly-up.
5. With your camera straight above the tick, focus your picture as close as possible and take a picture with the tick belly-up.

See the next pages for examples of photos e-mailed by citizens to MDHHS

Instructions for Emailing the Tick Photo to MDHHS:

1. Attach the two photos (JPEG, GIF, or PNG format) to an email by clicking on the "Submit Your Tick Pictures" button or email the following address: MDHHS-Bugs@michigan.gov
2. In the body of the email, please provide the following information:
    - Date the tick was collected:
    - Is the tick alive: Yes or No
    - Indicate if the tick was attached to (pick one):
        - Person
        - Animal (please specify):
        - Other (please specify):
    - Location where tick exposure probably occurred (pick one):
        - Home/Yard
        - School
        - Park/Recreation Area
    - Specific location where tick exposure probably occurred:
        - Specific location:
        - City:
        - County:
        - State:

After the email is sent, MDHHS staff will make all attempts to identify the tick based on your collection information, the condition of the tick, and the condition of the photos.

Tick Photo Do's and Don'ts

Visual guide

Since starting our email tick ID program several years ago, we have received hundreds of tick photos from Michigan residents. Many of these photos have been excellent, and some have been…. less than excellent. We understand that ticks are small and can sometimes be difficult to photograph. In order to help you avoid frustration and get good-quality photos, we have put together this guide to illustrate some helpful tick photo tips.

Photographing the tick against a solid white (or light colored) background works best. Including a ruler or object with a standardized size like a coin can help us identify your tick.

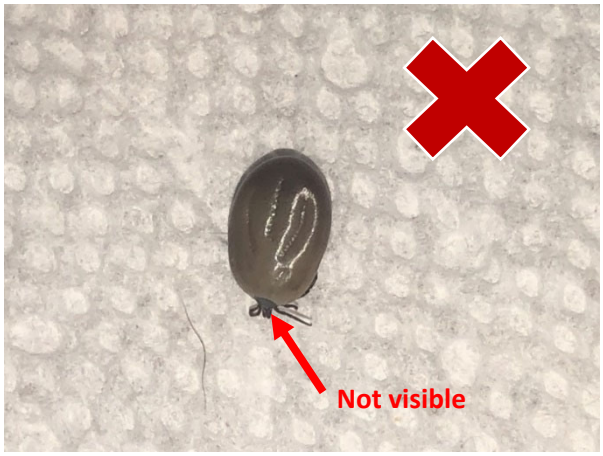
Photos where the important features are shadowed or not visible are very difficult to work with. Photos where the tick is still attached to a person or pet are not useful, as many important features will be hidden from view. Remove the tick from the person or pet before photographing it.

Tick Photo Do's and Don'ts

Visual guide

We always do our best to identify ticks from the photos supplied, however sometimes photos just don't have enough detail. Out of focus images, poorly lit photos, or pictures taken from too far away are very difficult to work with.

This tick is missing its head, but that's okay! Having an intact tick is ideal, but we were still able to identify this tick based on a clear photo of the remaining features and information from the citizen on its date and place of collection.



If the tick is engorged, the most helpful features for identification are the head and shield-like plate behind the head. You may need to lower the camera angle in order to best capture that area.