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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **On guard – Ticks, mosquitoes pose health hazard**

**FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo.** – What's on the menu? You – for millions of tiny, crawling airborne creatures trying to “dig in” to your skin.

According to 2nd Lt. Jacob Pinion, General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital Environmental Health chief, there are two insects of concern in the Fort Leonard Wood area – mosquitoes and ticks.

Pinion said in 2014, there were three ticks found with Encephalitis on post. Missouri--wide, there were 13 documented cases of the West Nile Virus, 36 cases of Tularemia, also known as rabbit fever, 88 cases of Erlichiosis and 246 cases of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, he added.

Two other vector-borne diseases in the area are Lyme Disease and the Bourbon Virus, also known as Heartlands Disease.

Environmental Health performs mosquito collection, typically from June to September, in training, recreation and housing areas on post, according to Pinion.

“We use Center for Disease Control light traps. If you see any of them around please don't touch them. They are plugged to a battery and sometimes contain dry ice,” Pinion said.

To combat the mosquito populations, Pinion recommends removing stagnant water.

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“This will significantly restrict the breeding,” Pinion said. “Limiting exposed skin is the best way to prevent getting bit by a mosquito.”

Although, mosquitoes pose some dangers, according to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, ticks are responsible for more human disease than any other insect in the United States.

“March through October is the high season for ticks, but I pulled one off of me in February,” Pinion said. “We use a tick drag to collect ticks.”

Understanding a little about tick behavior can give some clues on how to avoid being bitten. For example, one tried-and-true prevention measure is to walk in the center of trails to avoid overhanging brush and tall grass. This is effective because of the way some ticks seek a host, which is called questing.

Pinion said a questing tick will perch itself, front legs extended, on the stems of grass, low brush or on the edges of leaves on the ground. Using this ambush strategy, the tick waits until a suitable host brushes against the vegetation.

Once on a host, the tick seeks a place to attach and take a blood meal. Ticks attach on people in many places, but are most frequently found around the head, neck, underarms and groin. Light-colored clothing helps to spot ticks more easily, and tucking or blousing pant legs into socks helps slow them down in their quest for your skin.

According to Pinion, carbon dioxide, which is exhaled while breathing, as well as heat and movement serve as stimuli for tick questing behavior.

He said using an insect repellent that contains DEET (chemical name, N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) on skin works, because it interferes with the ticks' ability to locate you.

Products containing DEET currently are available to the public in a variety of liquids, lotions, sprays, and impregnated materials (e.g., towelettes, roll on).

Another repellent called permethrin, which is used on clothing, actually kills ticks, as well as mosquitoes and chiggers.

“Permethrin products are designed to bind with fabric and persist through launderings when used according to label directions,” Pinion said.

Prompt, careful inspection and removal of ticks is an important method of preventing disease.

An attached tick should be removed promptly. The longer it is attached, the greater the risk of infection, according to Pinion.

“When they get full they will regurgitate some of that back into you,” Pinion said.

According to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services there are many "old wives tales" about how to remove a tick. However, to reduce the chance of disease transmission, correctly using tweezers or commercial tick removal tools is preferred.

The key to using tweezers correctly is to position the tips of tweezers around the area where the tick's mouthparts enter the skin. Then use a slow, steady motion when pulling the tick away from the skin. After removing the tick, disinfect the skin with soap and water, or other available disinfectants.

For more information call Environmental Health at 573.596.0131, ext. 64913.

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Encl: Photo

Cutline: Second Lt. Jacob Pinion, General Leonard Wood Army Community Hospital Environmental Health chief, displays a trap used for mosquito collection in training, recreation and housing areas on post. Trapped ticks are tested for diseases which have been found in Missouri and on post.

### *About Fort Leonard Wood*

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*Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.*

*Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.*

*Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.*

