HEALTH ADVISORY # 227
Increase in Emerging Tickborne Disease Cases in West Virginia

TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals, and Other Healthcare Facilities

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LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: Please distribute to community health providers, hospital-based physicians, infection control preventionists, laboratory directors, and other applicable partners

OTHER RECIPIENTS: Please distribute to association members, staff, etc.

As summer approaches, West Virginia is seeing a rise in tickborne illnesses. While Lyme disease remains the most common, **Anaplasmosis** and **Babesiosis** are increasing significantly.

Anaplasmosis (*Anaplasma phagocytophilum*) is transmitted by blacklegged ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*). Cases rose from 17 in 2023 to 29 in 2024. The disease begins with flu-like symptoms and can rapidly worsen if untreated. In 2024, complications included respiratory failure (2.9%), organ failure (6.9%), leukopenia (24.1%), and thrombocytopenia (44.8%); 62% of cases required hospitalization. It is spreading west from eastern WV.
Babesiosis (*Babesia microti*), also spread by blacklegged ticks, is emerging in WV. Four of the state's eight total cases since 2017 occurred in 2024. It may mimic malaria on blood smears. Complications include heart attack (12.5%), ARDS (25%), thrombocytopenia (50%), and anemia (62.5%), with 75% of cases hospitalized.

Recommendations for Healthcare Providers:

1. Recognize and treat early to prevent severe disease.
2. Test for possible **coinfections** with Lyme or other tickborne diseases.
3. Monitor for **transfusion/transplant-related cases**:
    - Both diseases are transmissible through blood or organs.
    - Babesia is screened by blood centers; confirmatory results must be reported to the state.
    - **Report suspected cases to local health departments within one week.**
4. Educate patients on prevention:
    - Use **EPA-registered repellents**
    - Perform **daily tick checks**
    - Avoid **high-risk areas** (tall grass, brush)
    - Seek care promptly for flu-like symptoms after tick exposure.

For any questions regarding Anaplasmosis or Babesiosis, please contact the Epidemiologist on-call at (304) 558-5358, extension 2.

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