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CONSUMER ALERT: RISK OF EXPOSURE TO TICKS IN CHRISTMAS TREES IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY

For Immediate Release

Recent news reports include a warning from health officials that above-average temperatures increase the risk of ticks bearing Lyme disease being in Christmas trees. While above-average winter temperatures can increase the activity of insects and ticks, the risk of finding either on your Christmas tree is highly unlikely. Public health officials are experts on human diseases, but they are not experts on entomology at Christmas tree farms.

Here are some facts about Christmas trees to consider:

- Christmas trees are grown all throughout North America and Hawaii, including areas where temperatures are typically mild in December, so warmer than average weather in some areas is not new or unusual for Christmas trees.
- It is possible for a Christmas tree to have insects on it, but very uncommon. Nationally there are 1 or 2 per year reported to NCTA out of 28 million trees displayed.
- The most likely insect to be found on a cut Christmas tree is an aphid, not ticks, although they are similar looking. Aphids are innocuous plant-feeding insects that are never a health concern.
- According to entomologists who work with Christmas tree farms, the chances of finding insects in a tree are less than 1 in 100,000.
- According to entomologists who work with Christmas tree farms, ticks are most likely to occur in grass, not on conifer trees, and they over-winter in groundcover such as leaves, grass, etc.
- According to entomologists who work with Christmas tree farms, tick populations depend more on the availability of hosts such as rodents and other small mammals.
- Most trees sold on tree lots and at farms have been mechanically shaken, which is very effective at removing dust, old needles, insects, leaves, etc.
- If there is no shaking machine at point of purchase, then a consumer can grab hold of the central trunk in the middle and shake vigorously before bringing inside.

ABOUT NCTA

The National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA) is the national trade association representing the farm-grown Christmas tree industry. NCTA represents about 500 active member farms, 29 state and regional associations, and more than 3,800 affiliated businesses that grow and sell Christmas trees or provide related supplies and services. To learn more about NCTA, visit www.realchristmastrees.org.