

NEWS RELEASE

09/09/2025

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FLORENCE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT AWARDED FUNDING TO IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

[Florence, WI]– Florence County Health Department and Forest County Health Department were awarded \$10,000 from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to improve environmental public health in Florence and Forest Counties by reducing Lyme disease.

Thousands of Wisconsinites are diagnosed with Lyme disease every year. Lyme disease is the most common, but not only, illness spread by ticks. Wisconsin is one of the states reporting the highest number of cases in the country, according to DHS. Wisconsin had 6,469 cases of Lyme disease in 2024, the highest on record. On average, about 4,600 cases were reported each year during 2019-2023. The incidence of reported Lyme disease cases has quadrupled over the past 20 years.

Florence County reported 112 cases from 2010-2023. Forest County reported 120 cases from 2010–2023, though the actual number may be up to higher due to underreporting. Both Forest and Florence Counties share similar high-risk environmental conditions, including dense forests, abundant deer, and established deer tick populations. Both counties have older, rural populations with limited healthcare access, which can delay diagnosis and increase complication risk. Seasonal surges in tick activity, combined with gaps in prevention awareness, make Lyme disease a continuing health burden for residents and visitors.

This project is a dual county outreach initiative designed to reduce the risk of tick-borne illness through prevention education, resource distribution, and community engagement in Florence and Forest Counties. Leveraging current Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) data showing rising Lyme disease incidence across rural northern Wisconsin, the project will focus on high-risk seasons, locations, and populations. Specifically, Florence County will be collaborating with Florence County high school National Honor Society to create 400 tick kits that will be distributed throughout Florence County.

The project in Florence and Forest County is one of 15 environmental public health projects being funded throughout the state through the *Taking Action with Data* funding opportunity from the [Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program](#), which is housed at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

For more information, Florence County Health Department can be reached at 715-528-4837, or visit our website at <https://florencewipublichealth.com>.

For more information, Forest County Health Department can be reached at 715-478-3371, or visit <https://forestcountypublichealth.org>.

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