

WORKING in areas of bush where kangaroos live can mean days or even weeks of itchy spots for some unlucky people. What can be done about kangaroo ticks?

Spraying personal insect repellent over yourself and your clothes is one option - trousers tucked into socks, then a heavy dose of 'Aeroguard' or similar on boots, socks and trousers will stop the big Mommas climbing up from ground level, attracted by your body heat. But personally I don't like using insecticide, so I suggest disrobing in the shower and washing them away as soon as you get home. Wash your hair too, as they seem to like hiding there. Also, put all your clothes in a very hot bucket of water. I didn't do either of these recently and ended up with 44 bites in various places.

Adult ticks are easy to find, though it can be alarming to find a

AVOIDING KANGAROO TICKS

Kirsten Tullis

big fat grey thing stuck in your skin! Don't try and pull it out or it's head may stay behind to fester. Simply smear the tick with some Vaseline or tea tree oil and wait 20 minutes or so for it to suffocate. It will relax it's jaws on dying and can be wiped off.

The larval stage of kangaroo ticks, commonly called pepperticks, can occur in large numbers and are very, very small. They crawl up vegetation and wait for a meal to brush past. Don't sit in the middle of a kangaroo track! On a recent Bennett Brook CG flora survey trip I did just that and turned my arm over to find two or three hundred ticks rapidly spreading out from an area on my shirt sleeve. Ticks are a regular topic of conversation among

bush regenerators - colleagues have variously suggested we use sheep dip, a flame thrower and even a flea bomb in the car on the way home!

Pepper ticks seem to come out of nowhere, appearing in odd bodily places on waking in the morning as a tiny dark dot in the middle of a pink itchy spot. Invariably, each one just spent the wee hours leaving a trail of test bites. Worse still, the actual tick may not appear for days. Any that are found can be pulled off. For treating the bites I have tried tea tree oil and 1% hydrocortisone cream, but it would be good to hear if there is something better.

Has anyone any suggestions?

This article is adapted from one first published in the AABR Newsletter, May 2002, which Kirsten edits. She can be contacted on 9271 3549 or by email: kt500@iinet.net.au