

HAVING spent a fair bit of time in the Julimar district of Toodyay Shire during the last five years, my wife Ginny and I wondered what could possibly be causing the irritating little hard bubbles that appeared on various parts of the body. It was not very long afterwards that we learned these little bites were the result of kangaroo ticks.

Over the next couple of years we tried just about everything to repel the ticks, none seemed to work very well. Once the liquid repellent dried out, the ticks are not too concerned. Probably the best product we found was given to us by the former LFW Officer, Bob Huston. It consisted of six parts olive oil, with one part each of tea-tree oil and citronella oil. This worked up to a point but once the tea-tree and citronella oil had disappeared, it left a rancid smell on one's clothes.

One hot February morning I had been digging some holes in order to plant some grevilleas, given to us as Christmas presents. While we were sitting on the verandah, resting after the planting, Ginny noticed minute little reddish insects climbing all over my legs. They were pepper ticks! I had been doing a small job which required masking tape, and there was a roll handy. It was difficult picking off the ticks, so I tore off a piece of masking tape and dabbed it on the area where the ticks were - they came off easily (along with the hairs on my legs, rather painful!).

We soon learned to live with ticks and accepted that they are part of the

MEMBERS' PAGE

A NEW IDEA FOR COPING WITH TICKS

Jay Barnett

bush scene. During the following couple of years we just tried to minimise the tick bites with all the precautions that are known to us.

Then the masking tape idea came back to us but this time we used it in a different way.

It was just before last Christmas that we decided to wrap the masking tape around our ankles, legs or thighs - sticky side on outside. It worked! The ticks were trapped! I had been spending a bit of time in bird hides and it's a rather comfortable feeling to know that the ticks are going to be stopped dead in their tracks; we find that they struggle for a while then stay still. We even have competitions on how many we have caught - Ginny holds the record with 14! The smaller ticks get stuck in the first 5mm of tape, the larger ones get further, then become exhausted. We have found

that the success rate for control while sitting on chairs having a cuppa or birdwatching is just about 100%. Walking through thick low scrub, the tape tends to come off and needs to be replaced.

Constantly brushing against Balgas or Dryandra can attract the ticks onto oneself, as they are doing what comes naturally, looking for a host. In this situation the tape can be put on one's shoulder, upper arms and chest. Double-sided tape is more useful in this instance, albeit at twice the price. We now keep a roll of tape in our back-packs and see it as being as important as our flask of tea! We've found that the tape quickly loses adhesion if we are working with mattocks or rakes on our firebreaks.

Early in the piece, we took some pepper ticks down to the Department of Agriculture in Kensington. At first they thought they were mites, then under the microscope it was discovered that they were indeed ticks. Mites we would have gone along with, as the previous owner of the property kept Carnaby's Cockatoos captive in our bedroom!

Another bonus is that, since Christmas, we have had no complaints from family members accusing us of transporting ticks to Perth. Occasionally they must have left us to try out new blood!

We hope the masking tape will work for you.

If you'd like more detail, Ginny and Jay Barnett can be contacted on 9361 0922.

