

481—655.12(147,148,272C) Standards of practice—tick-borne disease diagnosis and treatment.

655.12(1) Exemption from discipline. A person licensed by the board under Iowa Code chapter 148 shall not be subject to discipline under this chapter or the board's enabling statute based solely on the physician's recommendation or provision of a treatment method for Lyme disease or other tick-borne disease if the recommendation or provision of such treatment meets all the following criteria:

a. The treatment is provided after an examination is performed and informed consent is received from the patient.

b. The physician identifies a medical reason for recommending or providing the treatment.

c. The treatment is provided after the physician informs the patient about other recognized treatment options and describes to the patient the physician's education, experience, and credentials regarding the treatment of Lyme disease or other tick-borne disease.

d. The physician uses the physician's own medical judgment based on a thorough review of all available clinical information and Lyme disease or other tick-borne disease literature to determine the best course of treatment for the individual patient.

e. The treatment will not, in the opinion of the physician, result in the direct and proximate death of or serious bodily injury to the patient.

655.12(2) Lyme disease treatment. Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with a few weeks of antibiotics. Over the past several years, the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society (ILADS) has supported longer courses of antibiotics for some patients, versus the prescribed treatment durations identified by the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and referenced by the CDC. While IDSA has expressed concern about overtreatment, ILADS points out that treatment decisions should be based on a risk-benefit analysis. Both groups have published evidence-based guidelines.

655.12(3) Tick-borne diseases. According to the CDC, tick-borne diseases include:

a. *Anaplasmosis* is transmitted to humans by tick bites primarily from the blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) in the northeastern and upper midwestern regions of the United States (U.S.) and the western blacklegged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*) along the Pacific coast.

b. *Babesiosis* is caused by microscopic parasites that infect red blood cells. Most human cases of babesiosis in the U.S. are caused by *Babesia microti*. *Babesia microti* is transmitted by the blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) and is found primarily in the northeastern and upper midwestern regions of the U.S.

c. *Borrelia mayonii* infection has recently been described as a cause of illness in the upper midwestern region of the U.S. This infection has been found in blacklegged ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*) in Minnesota and Wisconsin. *Borrelia mayonii* is a new species and is the only species besides *B. burgdorferi* known to cause Lyme disease in North America.

d. *Borrelia miyamotoi* infection has recently been described as a cause of illness in the U.S. This infection is transmitted by the blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) and has a geographic range similar to that of Lyme disease.

e. *Bourbon virus* infection has been identified in a limited number of patients in the midwestern and southern regions of the U.S. At this time, it is not known if the virus might be found in other areas of the U.S.

f. *Colorado tick fever* is caused by a virus transmitted by the Rocky Mountain wood tick (*Dermacentor andersoni*). Colorado tick fever occurs in the Rocky Mountain states at elevations of 4,000 to 10,500 feet.

g. *Ehrlichiosis* is transmitted to humans by the lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*), found primarily in the south central and eastern regions of the U.S.

h. *Heartland virus* cases have been identified in the midwestern and southern regions of the U.S. Studies suggest that lone star ticks (*Amblyomma americanum*) can transmit the virus. It is unknown if the virus may be found in other areas of the U.S.

i. *Lyme disease* is transmitted by the blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) in the northeastern and upper midwestern regions of the U.S. and by the western blacklegged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*) along the Pacific coast.

j. *Powassan disease* is transmitted by the blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) and the groundhog tick (*Ixodes cookei*). Cases have been reported primarily from northeastern states and the Great Lakes region.

k. *Rickettsia parkeri rickettsiosis* is transmitted to humans by the Gulf Coast tick (*Amblyomma maculatum*).

l. *Rocky Mountain spotted fever* is transmitted by the American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*), Rocky Mountain wood tick (*Dermacentor andersoni*), and the brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*) in the U.S. The brown dog tick and other tick species are associated with Rocky Mountain spotted fever in Central America and South America.

m. *Southern tick-associated rash illness* is transmitted via bites from the lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*) found in the southeastern and eastern regions of the U.S.

n. *Tick-borne relapsing fever* is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected soft ticks. Tick-borne relapsing fever has been reported in 15 states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming and is associated with sleeping in rustic cabins and vacation homes.

o. *Tularemia* is transmitted to humans by the dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*), the wood tick (*Dermacentor andersoni*), and the lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*). Tularemia occurs throughout the U.S.

p. *364D rickettsiosis (Rickettsia phillipi)* is transmitted to humans by the Pacific Coast tick (*Dermacentor occidentalis*). This is a new disease that has been found in California.

655.12(4) Grounds for discipline. A physician may be subject to disciplinary action for violation of these rules or the rules found in 481—Chapter 661. Grounds for discipline include but are not limited to the following:

a. The physician fails to perform and document an appropriate examination or fails to obtain and document appropriate informed consent from the patient.

b. The physician fails to identify and document a medical reason for recommending or providing the treatment.

c. The physician fails to inform the patient about other recognized treatment options or fails to describe to the patient the physician's education, experience, and credentials regarding the treatment of Lyme disease or other tick-borne diseases.

d. The physician fails to use the physician's own medical judgment based on a thorough review of all available clinical information and Lyme disease or other tick-borne disease literature to determine the best course of treatment for the individual patient.

e. The treatment provided, in the opinion of the physician, will likely result in the direct and proximate death of or serious bodily injury to the patient.

[ARC 9115C, IAB 4/16/25, effective 5/21/25; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 6/11/25]