

# SOFT TICK RELAPSING FEVER

## What is STRF?

- STRF is the most commonly reported tick-borne disease acquired in WA. STRF in WA is transmitted by the soft tick *Ornithodoros hermsi*, which commonly feeds on rodents.



## Symptoms:



Fever



Vomiting



Body Aches



Chills

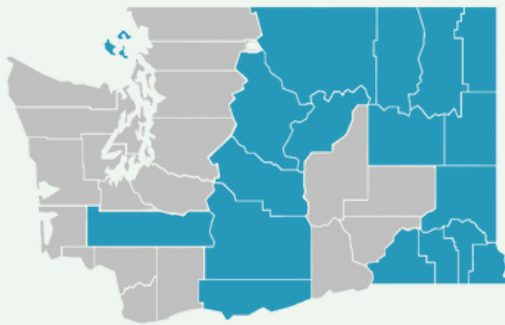
STRF characteristically cycles between 2-7 days of fever and 4-14 days without fever. This cycle may repeat many times, over several weeks, if the person is not treated.



## How do you get it?

- Soft ticks bite and feed for much shorter periods of time than hard ticks. They live within rodent nests and burrows, rather than grassy or bushy areas. Their bites are painless, and most people don't realize that they have been bitten. Soft ticks can get the *Borellia* bacteria by feeding on infected rodents.
- Most cases are associated with overnight stays in rural, rodent-infested cabins. STRF infections typically occur in the summer, but people can become infected year-round.

### Human Relapsing Fever Cases by County of Exposure, 1980-2024



## Preventing STRF

- Avoid sleeping in rodent-infested buildings.
- Check sleeping areas for evidence of rodents:
  - Holes in the floor or walls
  - Shredded material from mattresses
  - Rodent droppings
- If you cannot avoid sleeping in a rodent-infested building, pull beds away so that they are not touching any walls. Avoid sleeping on the floor.
- If you are renting a cabin and notice a rodent infestation, alert the owner.

## Guidance for Cabin Owners

- Rodent-proof cabins, homes, and other buildings.
- If your cabin has a rodent infestation, consult a licensed pest control professional to discuss rodent and tick control measures. Eliminating rodents without tick control may increase the risk of people becoming infected, because hungry ticks will seek out other mammals (including humans) on which to feed if rodents are unavailable.
- Avoid vacuuming, sweeping, or stirring up dust in and around rodent-contaminated areas to **prevent hantavirus pulmonary syndrome**, a rare, but potentially fatal respiratory disease.

### Tips for rodent-proofing cabins:

