



勝利動物醫院  
Victory Animal Hospital

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## Ticks in Dogs and Cats

### What are ticks?

Although ticks are commonly thought of as insects, they are actually *arachnids* similar to scorpions, spiders and mites. All ticks have four pairs of legs (eight legs in total) as adults and have no antennae. Adult insects by comparison have three pairs of legs (six legs) and one pair of antennae. Ticks are parasites that feed on the blood of their host, which can be an animal or a human.

"Ticks are efficient carriers of disease."

Ticks are efficient carriers of disease because they attach firmly when sucking blood, feed slowly and may go unnoticed for a considerable time while feeding. Ticks take several days to complete feeding.

### What is the life cycle of the tick?

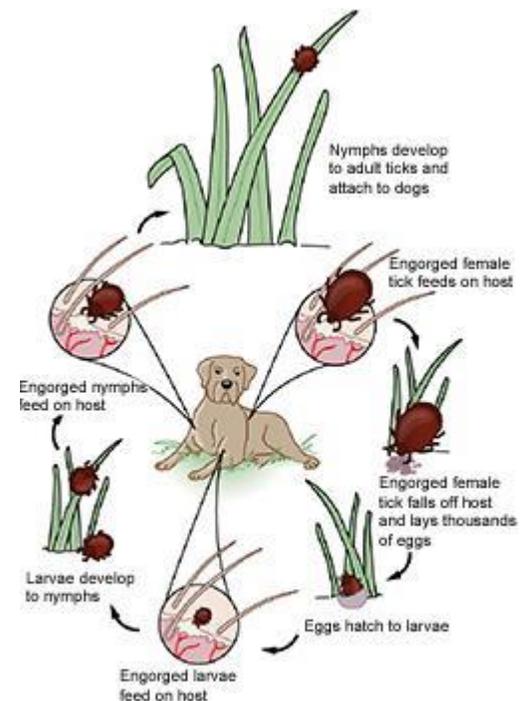
Ticks have four distinct life stages:

1. Egg
2. Six-legged larva
3. Eight-legged nymph
4. Adult

Females deposit from 3,000 to 6,000 eggs on the ground. Adult ticks seek host animals and after engorgement on blood, they quickly mate.

Male ticks usually die after mating with one or more females, although some may continue to live for several months. Females die soon after laying their eggs in protected habitats on the ground. The life cycle requires from as little as 2 months to more than 2 years, depending on the species.

After the egg hatches, the tiny larva (sometimes called a "seed tick") feeds on an appropriate host. The larva then develops ("molts") into the larger nymph. The nymph feeds on a host and then molts into an even larger adult. Male and female adults feed and mate on the host; the female falls to the ground to lay her eggs, continuing the life cycle.



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## How did my pet get ticks?

Ticks wait for host animals on the tips of grasses and shrubs; they are not commonly found in trees. When the plant is brushed by a moving animal or person, the tick quickly lets go of the vegetation and climbs onto the host. Ticks can only crawl; they cannot jump or fly. Some species of ticks will crawl several feet toward a host. Ticks can be active on winter days if the ground temperatures are above 45 degrees Fahrenheit (7.2 degrees Celsius).

"The deer or blacklegged tick can transmit Lyme disease and anaplasosis to dogs and humans."

"This tick is tropical in origin and does not survive long, cold winters outdoors."

## How can ticks be prevented?

There are many different types of tick preventatives available in the marketplace. Some require less effort on the part of the owner than others. Some products are available over the counter, while others are only available through your veterinarian. There are effective monthly preventatives that are typically applied to the skin at the back of the neck and represent a convenient method of control for these external parasites. Your veterinarian will make specific recommendations to keep your pet parasite free.

## What should I do if I find a tick on me or my pet?

Use blunt tweezers or disposable gloves to handle the tick. *If you must use your fingers, shield them with a tissue or paper towel.* Infectious agents may be contracted through mucous membranes or breaks in the skin simply by handling infected ticks. This is especially important for people who "de-tick" pets because ticks infesting dogs and other domestic animals can carry Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis or other diseases capable of infecting humans.



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Grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible. This reduces the possibility of the head detaching from the body upon removal.

Pull the tick straight out with a steady, even pressure. Do not twist or jerk the tick as this may cause the mouthparts to break off and remain in the skin, increasing the chances of infection. Continue applying steady pressure even if the tick does not release immediately. It may take a minute or two of constant, slow pulling to cause the tick to release.

After removing the tick, thoroughly disinfect the bite area and wash your hands with soap and water. Home remedies such as applying petroleum jelly or grease, or touching the rear of the tick with a hot match do not work effectively and are not recommended. These techniques cause the tick to salivate and can actually increase the chance of getting a disease.

After removing the tick, you may wish to preserve it in rubbing alcohol for identification. Be sure to label the container with information about the time and place where the tick bite occurred. This activity will help you to remember details of the incident, especially if a rash or other symptoms associated with Lyme disease appear later. This information will be of help to a veterinarian or physician diagnosing an illness.