

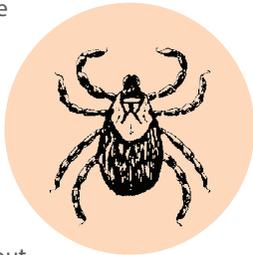
UNWELCOME GUESTS!

Just like fleas, ticks are classified as parasites; they live off of the blood from their host at the hosts' expense. Ticks are external parasites, living on the blood of mammals, birds and sometimes reptiles. They extract the blood by cutting a hole in the host's epidermis, into which they insert their hypostome, likely keeping the blood from clotting by excreting an anticoagulant.

Ticks fall under the arachnid family as they have eight legs, like spiders, in their nymph and adult stage. Ticks come in two varieties. There are soft ticks (Argasidae) and hard ticks (Ixodidae). Hard ticks get their name from the large and tough shield that they carry on their backs. Soft ticks lack this shield and have a leathery 'skin' instead. Another difference between soft and hard ticks is the location of their mouth parts. Hard ticks have their mouth parts on the front their body, giving the impression of a 'head', while soft ticks carry their mouth parts on their belly.

Ticks don't jump or fly—you can pick them up on your clothes, skin, or hair just by brushing against a leaf or blade of grass they are sitting on. Once they catch a ride on you and your pet, they will look for a place to attach—like on the backs of knees, in armpits, hair or near your hairline and behind or in ears.

Ticks need humidity in the air in order to undergo metamorphosis from egg to larva and once in the adult stage they need this humidity to keep them hydrated. Be on the lookout for these pesky creatures that lurk in moist, shaded woods, low-growing brush, dense weeds, or piles of leaves. Ticks can also be found sneaking around your neighbourhood—even in your own backyard especially in woodpiles and areas of high grass.



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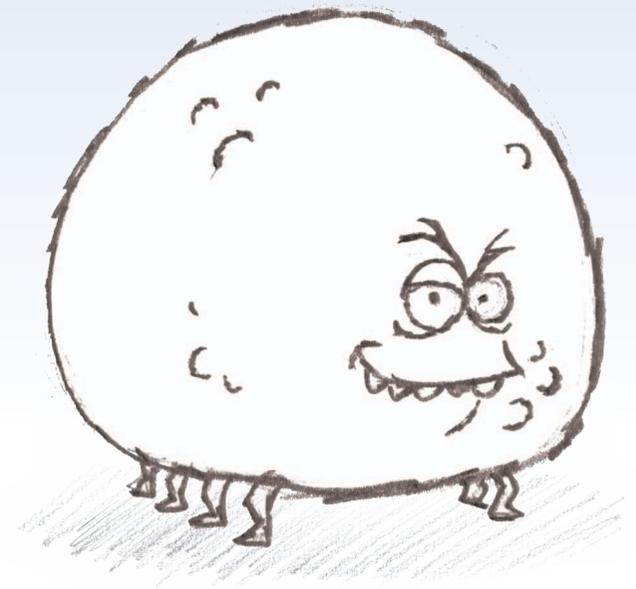
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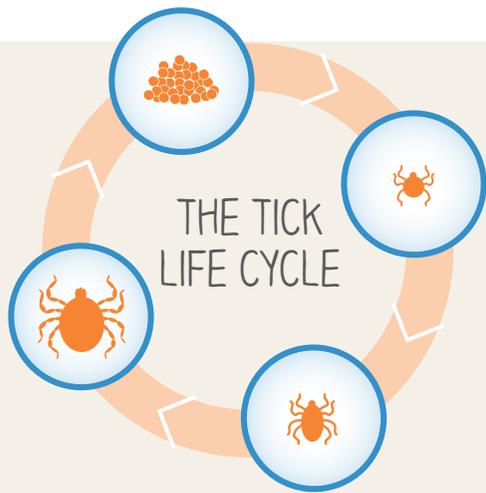
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*Visit any one of our six branches.
Make use of our after-hours emergency facilities
at 1 Kontiki Road, Bellville or visit our
website at www.tah.co.za*



DEALING WITH UNWELCOME GUESTS:
TICKS!



1. Egg

The female hard tick feeds once, lays one large batch of eggs sometimes numbering in the thousands, and dies. Most of the soft ticks engorge with blood several times and deposit about 20 to 50 eggs in a batch after each blood meal. Eggs hatch in two weeks to several months, depending upon temperature, humidity and other environmental factors.

2. Larva

The larvae, or “seed ticks,” have only six legs, and the sexes are indistinguishable. Their chances of attaching to a host are slim, sometimes resulting in prolonged fasts. Despite tolerance to starvation, a very high percentage of larva die. After a blood meal, the engorged larvae usually drop to the soil and moult to the eight-legged nymph stage.

3. Nymph

The nymph has eight legs like the adult but has no genital opening. Hard ticks have only one nymphal stage, the nymph becoming an adult after moulting. Soft ticks may have several nymphal stages.

4. Tick

Typically, the nymph moults after engorgement and becomes an adult. The sex of a tick is then distinguishable at this stage between the male and female hard / soft tick.

Most ticks do not carry diseases, and most tick bites do not cause serious health problems. But it is important to remove a tick as soon as you find it. Removing the tick completely may help you avoid diseases such as Lyme disease that the tick may pass on during feeding or a skin infection where it bit you.

STEPS TO REMOVING A TICK

WHEN YOU RETURN HOME FROM AREAS WHERE TICKS MIGHT LIVE, CAREFULLY EXAMINE YOUR SKIN AND SCALP FOR TICKS. CHECK YOUR PETS TOO.

When finding a tick on you or your pet, Veterinarians advise that you stay calm and don't rush it. Moving too fast when removing a tick could potentially create more problems, both for your pet and for you.

Step 1 - Confinment

Throwing a tick in the trash or flushing it down the toilet will not kill it, and it's actually best to hold on to it for a while for veterinary testing in case your pet falls ill from the bite. Be ready with a screw-top jar containing some rubbing alcohol.

Step 2 - Gloves

Put on latex or rubber gloves so you'll never have direct contact with the tick or your pet's bite area. Ticks can carry infective agents that may enter your bloodstream through breaks in your skin or through mucous membranes (if you touch your eyes, nostrils or mouth).

Step 3 - Partner up

You don't want your pet squirming away before you're finished, so if possible, have a helper on hand to distract, soothe or hold her still.

Step 4 - The removal

Treat the bite area with rubbing alcohol and, using a pair of tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the animal's skin as possible. Pull straight upwards with steady, even pressure. Place the tick in your jar. Do not twist or jerk the tick! This may leave the mouth-parts embedded in your pet, or cause the tick to regurgitate infective fluids. Do not squeeze or crush the body of the tick, because its fluids (saliva and gut contents) may contain infective organisms.

Step 5 - All that remains

Sometimes, in spite of doing everything right, a tick's mouth-parts will get left behind in your pet's skin. If the area doesn't appear red or inflamed, the best thing to do is to disinfect it and not to try to take the mouth-parts out. A warm compress to the area might help the body expel them, but do not go at it with tweezers.

Step 6 - Squeaky clean

Thoroughly disinfect the bite site and wash your hands with soap and water (even though you were wearing gloves). Sterilize your tweezers with alcohol or by carefully running them over a flame.

Step 7 - Watch pet

It is extremely important for you as an owner to keep an eye on your pet after the removal of the tick. The bite area may start showing signs of localized infection. The symptoms of most tick-borne diseases include fever and lethargy, though some can also cause weakness, lameness, joint swelling and/or anemia. Signs may take days, weeks or months to appear. Some ticks can cause a temporary condition called “tick paralysis,” which is manifested by a gradual onset of difficulty walking that may develop into paralysis. . If the area is already red and inflamed, or becomes so later, please bring your pet to your nearest TAH branch with your jarred tick so your veterinarian can evaluate and start treatment.

Step 8 - Treatment

It is very important that your pets have the best chance to fight against tick infestation. Speak to your vet about what treatment steps you can take. There are products such as sprays, collars and pipets that will suit your pet and will help against this parasite.