

What is your Tick and Lyme disease IQ?

Guelph, ON - Canadians are more aware than ever before about ticks, tick-borne diseases and the risks they pose to both pet owners and their pets.

Ticks are part of the Arachnid family and they feed on mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. When the outdoor temperatures reach 4°C, in early spring or on warmer days in the colder season, you shouldn't be surprised to see ticks active and looking for a host to crawl onto to take a blood meal. But make no mistake, just because you don't see them, doesn't mean they aren't feeding on your pet. The immature stages can be the size of a pin head!

Climate change, environmental impacts like reforestation, the expansion of host animals and bird migration are contributing to the geographical expansion of ticks. Throughout Canada, several tick species have been identified with varying geographical distribution. The ticks that pose the greatest health risks to our pets are the Eastern black-legged tick (also called the Deer tick), the American dog tick and the Brown dog tick.

Tick-borne diseases represent a growing health hazard for both pets and people.

Ticks can transmit Lyme disease and many other pathogens that may cause debilitating disease and even death. Initial tick attachment and feeding of at least 24-48 hours is required before transmission of many tick-borne pathogens can occur.

Lyme disease, caused by the bacteria *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is primarily transmitted by the Deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). In dogs, symptoms can include fever, lethargy, enlarged lymph nodes, arthritis and renal disease. Your veterinarian can make a diagnosis and treatment recommendations for Lyme disease based on a history of a bite from a Deer tick, clinical signs and blood testing.

It's important to be vigilant about tick prevention and be an advocate for your pet!

Pet owners should speak with their veterinary health care team and implement a **Comprehensive Tick Control Program**:

- Have your pet tested for tick-borne diseases
- Administer a tick control medication
- Consider a Lyme vaccination in endemic areas
- Avoid tick habitats and remove tall grasses and leaves
- Check your pets daily for ticks
- Use a tick remover or fine-pointed tweezers to remove ticks. Need help removing a tick from your pet? Contact your veterinarian!

Contact:

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When the outdoor temperatures reach 4°C ticks, like this adult female Deer tick, wait on a blade of grass looking for a host to crawl onto to take a blood meal.

Photo credit: James Gathany