

# The Menace Among Us

Keeping You and Your Pets ON GUARD Against Ticks This Fall.

## FEATURED STORY

### *Lyme Disease: Pets, Prevention and You.*

It's high time for ticks to strike in Canada, and incidents of Lyme disease are on the rise. Staying informed about ticks, knowing the risks and focusing on prevention can help keep your pet – and your family – safe from Lyme disease this season.

First, get to know their habitat; ticks love to dwell in wooded, grassy areas, especially thick underbrush. Some outdoor jobs and recreational activities, like landscaping, farming, hiking, hunting and fishing, can put you or your pet at a higher risk. When it comes to the transmission of Lyme disease, *Ixodes scapularis*, or “deer ticks”, are the usual suspects. Adult deer ticks are especially active in mid-to-late fall. These pests cannot jump or fly, but are skilled at latching onto a host at ground level and crawling upward to find exposed skin. And despite what many people think, dogs do not give Lyme disease to people; humans are at risk only if bitten by an infected tick.

While all Canadians are at risk for Lyme disease, eastern Canada has reported the highest rate of infection across the country. Lyme disease is often misdiagnosed, during the stage when it's easiest to treat. Infection risk is present year-round, but be aware that you and your pet are most prone to Lyme disease from May through September. In addition, keep in mind that ticks are more than just a springtime hazard. If fall temperatures remain mild, ticks can peak again in October or November.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, certain species of ticks may display increased activity at different times throughout the spring, then again in the fall. In particular, a study from Ontario shows primarily *I. scapularis* ticks peaking first in the spring months, then a second time in November.<sup>2</sup>

Climate change is also projected to be a factor in the overall tick prevalence. It is speculated that in the next 80 years, the total area of land suitable for ticks and their hosts will increase by 68.9% in North America.<sup>3</sup> In Canada, that number is estimated at a 212.9% increase.<sup>3</sup> This means that warmer temperatures will invite an influx of ticks well into the fall months over a greater geographic area, creating an even more urgent need for vigilance and yearly pet vaccination.

To protect yourself from ticks, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts, and tuck your pants into your socks. Wearing light coloured clothing makes ticks easier to see. It may also be helpful to walk with a partner who can watch for ticks on you or your pet. Try to stay on clear, unobstructed trails, and away from the fringe area between the woods and open land. Spraying an insect repellent on your body and clothing can also deter ticks however consult product caution statements before using, especially on young children. Immediately after being outside in tick-infested areas, check your clothes and body, as well as your pet's body, for ticks. If you discover one or more ticks attached, proper removal is essential.

### **There are several methods for removing ticks.**

For a full list, consult the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation at

<http://canlyme.com/lyme-basics/tick-removal/>.

Most commonly, ticks can be removed using fine-pointed tweezers or a tick removal device, grasping the tick as close as possible to the skin surface, and pulling straight outward. Once the tick is out, it's important to wash the bite with soap and water and treat it with an antiseptic.



**If the tick that bit you or your pet is a Lyme-carrying species** or if you are unsure, consult your doctor or veterinarian immediately. Symptoms of Lyme disease may not present right away, but early detection can aid in a successful treatment. If you experience headaches, body aches, fever or congestion, or notice your dog behaving differently, seek medical or veterinary care immediately. If left untreated, Lyme disease can cause irrevocable damage to the joints, nervous system and more.

Remember, Lyme disease cannot be easily cured – but it can be prevented. Stay informed, follow these simple steps for prevention, and ask your veterinarian about protecting your dog(s) from Lyme disease with yearly vaccination and a monthly tick control product today!

#### References:

- 1 Ogden NH, Trudel L, Artsob H, et al. *Ixodes scapularis* ticks collected by passive surveillance in Canada: Analysis of geographic distribution and infection with Lyme borreliosis agent *Borrelia burgdorferi*. *J. Med. Entomol.* 2006;43(3):600-609.
- 2 Nelder MP, Russell C, Lindsay LR, et al. Population-based passive tick surveillance and detection of expanding foci of blacklegged ticks *Ixodes scapularis* and the Lyme disease agent *Borrelia burgdorferi* in Ontario, Canada. *PLoS ONE.* 2014;9(8).
- 3 Brownstein JS, Holford TR, Fish D. Effect of climate change on Lyme disease risk in North America. *Ecohealth.* 2005;2(1):38-46.

