

Take the Bite Out of Tick Season!

If you are going to be outside to enjoy the nice weather with your best friend, you need to remember one pet care duty: always check for ticks. These little critters have a way of burrowing deep into your dog's fur in an attempt to hide out and feed for as long as possible. Protect your pet by taking the time to do a thorough tick inspection every time you come back from the outdoors.

Dogs aren't the only ones who can get ticks! Make sure you check your cat if you take them outdoors or if you have another animal in your home that ventures outside, as they can carry them indoors as well.

What can you do?

Checking for ticks

Check your pets for ticks every day, especially during tick season: spring, summer and fall. It might be best to check for ticks while wearing a pair of latex gloves, as humans are susceptible to infection from tick diseases as well.

Brush your fingers through their fur applying enough pressure to feel any small bumps. Be sure to check between your dog's toes, behind ears, under armpits and around the tail and head, too.

If you do feel a bump, pull the fur apart to see what's there. A tick that has embedded itself in your pet will vary in size, something from the size of a pinhead to a grape depending on how long its been attached. Ticks are usually black or dark brown in color but will turn a grayish-white after feeding in what's referred to as an engorged state.

Be thorough with your inspection. This may mean that you have to get out a fine-tooth comb and go over every inch of your pet's wiry and thick coat. It may be a bit of a chore, but it is certainly worth it—the longer a tick stays on a dog or cat only increases the risk for disease transmission and infection.

Removing ticks

Removing embedded ticks is a delicate operation because it's easy for a piece of the tick to break off and remain in your pet's skin if done improperly. Follow the removal steps below. (Infection can occur after 24 hours, so if you find a tick on your pet, remove it right away.)

1. Grasp the tick very close to the skin with a pair of fine-tipped tweezers.
2. With a steady motion, pull the tick's body away from the skin. Avoid crushing the tick to prevent infection. It is important to try to remove the ticks head. Do not twist or jerk the tick.
3. After removal, clean your pet's skin with soap and warm water and dispose of the tick. Dispose of the tick by submersing it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/contained, wrapping it tightly in tape or flushing it down the toilet. Never crush a tick with your fingers.

Using these steps can help ensure the successful removal of ticks. Never use petroleum jelly, nail polish, a hot match, or other products to remove a tick. Doing so can harm your pet and may cause an embedded tick to release more disease-carrying saliva. Your goal is remove the tick as quickly as possible -- not waiting for it to detach.

Flea and Tick Prevention can be purchased at nearly every store or directly from your vet. Any step you, as a pet owner, can take to further protect your furry friend is a step in the right direction!