

# Don't let ticks tick you off!

Guelph, ON

Even just a few years ago, it was not unusual for Canadian pet owners to have never seen a tick on their pet. Tick populations have grown and spread in recent years, making ticks and the diseases they carry a reality. Pet owners commonly report seeing ticks on their pets now.

Generally, ticks are active and feeding at temperatures above 0°C. In Canada, this means that active ticks can be found in every province, every month throughout the year. This includes months when snow is present. On a sunny winter day, they can even be found on vegetation poking through snowbanks.

Ticks present a variety of risks for pet owners. Where dogs find ticks, there is a possibility for ticks to find humans as well. Pet owners are typically not fond of the idea of picking ticks off themselves or their dogs. Beyond the “gross factor,” ticks can also carry diseases that can infect both dogs and people.

Pet owners can take steps to reduce finding ticks on their pets and the risk of disease. First, pet owners should be aware of tick habitats (long grass, brushy areas, heavy vegetation). Ticks can be found in the countryside and forested areas as well as urban gardens and parks. If these habitats cannot be avoided, care should be taken to reduce tick biting and kill the ones that do attach. Pet owners should talk to their veterinary teams about topical options to reduce tick attachment and topical and oral medications to kill ticks if they do attach. Even when using a tick treatment, pet owners should continue to inspect their pets and remove ticks after walking or playing in areas where ticks may be found. If you find a tick on your pet, they should be removed by grasping the tick as close to the skin as possible with tweezers and pulling it straight out. Ticks should not be twisted, burned or doused in alcohol, gasoline, etc. Finally, pet owners can discuss if vaccination for Lyme disease is appropriate for their region and their pet.

Ticks are expected to continue spreading and growing in number. Pet owners should discuss their dog's risk for tick exposure and the best management strategy with their veterinary team. As with many concerns, prevention is key!

## For more information:

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