

TICKS



American Dog Ticks
Blacklegged "Deer" Ticks
Brown Dog Ticks
Lone Star Ticks



AMERICAN DOG TICKS

Color: Brown with whitish to gray markings

Shape: Oval, flattened

Size: 3/16 inch unengorged, 5/8 inch engorged

Region: Found throughout the U.S., except the Rocky Mountains area

Habits

It is thought that American dog ticks are attracted by the scent of animals, so they are common along roads and trails. Adult ticks prefer domestic dogs as hosts and can therefore be brought into the home and potentially transferred to humans.

Threats

The American dog tick is the primary vector of Rocky Mountain spotted fever in the United States. It is also known to transmit tularemia, a rare bacterial infection, and cause tick paralysis.

Prevention

When in an area where ticks are common, wear long sleeved shirts and pants, preferably light colored so ticks will be easy to detect. Tuck pants into socks, and use a tick repellent when outside. To get rid of ticks and limit risks indoors, inspect clothing and skin when heading inside.



BLACKLEGGED “DEER” TICKS

Color: Orange-brown with dark legs

Shape: Flat, broad oval

Size: 1/8 inch

Region: Found primarily in the northeastern, mid-Atlantic, southeastern and north central regions of the U.S.

Habits

Blacklegged deer ticks climb shrubs and grass to wait for a passing host. While adult ticks feed primarily on white-tailed deer during the winter, the nymphs feed on squirrels, raccoons, skunks, mice, humans and birds.

Threats

Blacklegged deer ticks are a vector of Lyme disease, babesiosis and anaplasmosis. Lyme disease is the primary concern, especially in the U.S. Symptoms can include fever, fatigue, headache and a bull's eye shaped skin rash. It can also affect the heart, the nervous system and joints if left untreated.

Prevention

Stay in the center of trails, away from vegetation when hiking. Wear light-colored long pants, long-sleeved shirts and closed toe shoes when in tall grass or wooded areas. Apply bug spray containing at least 20% DEET when outdoors. Always inspect yourself thoroughly for ticks after being outdoors and if you find a tick on you, remove it with a slow, steady pull. If you believe you have contracted Lyme disease, contact a doctor immediately.



BROWN DOG TICKS

Color: Reddish brown, gray-blue when engorged

Shape: Oval, flattened

Size: 1/8 inch unengorged; 1/2 inch engorged

Region: Found throughout the U.S.

Habits

Brown dog ticks prefer dogs as hosts. They typically attach to the ears or between the toes and do not travel very far after dropping off a host. They are unique because they can complete their entire life cycle indoors.

Threats

Brown dog ticks rarely attack humans, but they can transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever and several other tick-borne diseases to dogs including canine ehrlichiosis and canine babesia.

Prevention

The best way to prevent brown dog ticks is cleanliness. Keeping pet areas clean and free of debris can help locate engorged ticks looking to lay eggs and remove them from the house. Pet treatment is also an important prevention tool. Pets should be treated with flea and tick repellent as necessary.



LONE STAR TICKS

Color: Reddish brown, becoming slate gray when engorged

Shape: Oval, flattened

Size: Females are 1/6-1/4 inch un-engorged and 1/2 inch engorged; Males are smaller

Region: West central Texas northward to northern Missouri and eastward from Maine to the southern tip of Florida

Habits

The lone star tick is considered a three-host tick because each feeding stage requires a different host. Feeding typically occurs during the spring and early summer months. Larvae and nymphs feed on the blood of birds, rodents and small wild animals like rabbits, squirrels and raccoons. Adults often feed on larger animals, including foxes, dogs, white-tailed deer and humans. This tick species then enters a non-feeding period in mid to late summer, which is triggered by decreasing daylength.

Threats

All three developmental stages of the lone star tick can feed on humans by attaching to the skin using its mouthparts. This tick can be a vector of tularemia, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and ehrlichiosis.

Prevention

Outdoors, experts recommend wearing tick repellent and long-sleeved clothes. Homeowners should keep grass cut low and ensure weeds and woodpiles are removed.