



## The trouble with ticks!

Every year seems to be worse than the last for the number of ticks I see on my patients. This is probably due to the gradual warming of our climate which the ticks' thrive on. Exotic ticks are now being found in our country that years ago would only have been found in much warmer climes. These can spread different diseases to our pets than we would traditionally see in this country.

Ticks are generally found in areas of woodland, moorland and grassland, like we have all around us and just wait for an animal (or human) to brush past them so that they can jump on and feed. They attach using their mouthparts and will feed on blood from their host for several days before finally dropping off.

Ticks can cause problems in two ways:

**Local tissue reaction** – they can sometimes cause a marked tissue reaction at the attachment site. This can develop into an abscess especially if scratched by your pet.

**Tick borne diseases** – more importantly, ticks can carry infectious diseases which may be transmitted to pets and humans. The most common one is **Lymes disease** caused by the tick borne pathogen, *Borrelia burgdorferi*. However other more exotic diseases can occur especially if your pet has been abroad.

To minimise the risks of Lyme disease in your pets you should check for them daily when stroking and grooming. You should carefully remove any ticks found with a tick hook within 24 hours of attachment if possible. This approach works because a tick infected with *Borrelia* has to feed for several hours and often 24-48 hours elapse before disease transmission occurs. It is also important to check yourself as ticks often also attach to your legs when walking in long grass!

Use a chemical tick protection that will rapidly kill or repel ticks – this is important in reducing tick feeding and therefore exposure to Lyme disease. Your Veterinary Surgeon will recommend the best tick control for you and your pet. These come in a variety of forms; tablets, spot on products and sprays.

**Tick removal; DO** ensure you use a specially designed v-shaped tick remover that completely removes the tick. It is important not to leave the head in situ as this can cause a nasty reaction!

**DO NOT** burn, freeze, squeeze the tick or cover it in perfume or vaseline– this will lead to regurgitation of the tick's stomach contents resulting in increased risk of disease transmission.

If your dog has ticks, especially if it becomes unwell then it is important to contact your Veterinary Surgeon as soon as possible. And as we all know, prevention is better than cure, so speaking to them now about a product to prevent ticks may save both you and your pet a lot of trouble later!

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