

Ticks & Tick-Borne Diseases: Information for Pet Owners & Clinicians

Quick Tick Facts

Any tick can potentially transmit disease.

Many tick species are expanding their ranges and moving into areas where they have not been found historically.

Ticks can be found on pets during all seasons of the year, not just in the spring and summer.

Travel may be a factor in any encounters where a tick is found on a host.

What if ticks are found on a pet? DCPAH recommends that the pet is taken to a veterinarian for tick removal done by following the instructions available from the Centers for Disease Control: cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html. It is important to carefully remove a tick so that the head remains attached. This can aid in identification which is important for determining which diseases are of concern. If the tick cannot be identified at the veterinary clinic, the tick can be sent to DCPAH for identification.

Symptoms for tick-borne diseases in animals are typically non-specific but often include fever, weakness, lethargy, lameness, lack of appetite, vomiting, and diarrhea. While much of the veterinary focus on tick-borne diseases tends to be on dogs, many species, including horses, are also susceptible. Prevention, identification, diagnostic testing, and early treatment for infection are keys to decreasing the incidence of severe illness and fatalities.

If a tick is never found on a pet, can the pet still acquire a tick-borne disease? Yes. Larva and nymph stages are very small and easily missed when a pet is examined for ticks. Also, DCPAH has received several engorged ticks that were not found on the pet, but in the house in areas frequented by the pet. So it is possible even for an engorged tick to escape detection.

For Additional Information

CDC Tick Website - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - cdc.gov/ticks

Offers comprehensive information about tick geographic distribution, life cycle and hosts, and diseases transmitted; suggestions for avoiding ticks on people, pets and in the yard; instructions for removal; and a listing of symptoms of tick-related illness in people. This site has easy navigation and good use of graphics and photos.

DCPAH Tick-Borne Disease Diagnostics - Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health - animalhealth.msu.edu

DCPAH can perform the following tests: Anaplasma phagocytophilum IFA, Ehrlichia canis IFA, Equine Tick Core Panel, Lyme IFA, Tick-Borne Disease Antibody Screen, Tick Identification, and Tick PCR. For more details on these or other tests, visit our website and click on "Available Tests." A new article on ticks and tick-borne disease will be available in the Fall 2012 issue of our newsletter, *Diagnostic News*. See also a previous article from Fall 2008 in "News Archives."

Resources for Michigan Residents

MDCH Lyme Disease Website - Michigan Department of Community Health - michigan.gov/emergingdiseases

Provides information about Lyme disease including a guide to Michigan's five most common ticks; additional detail about blacklegged ticks; history and distribution of the disease; treatment and prevention; transmission and development; clinical signs and pathology in humans; suggestions for Michigan's public; and **tick identification and testing submittal instructions**. The site also contains specific information and resources for human health, wildlife, **livestock and pet issues**; as well as testing tables and maps, laws and regulations, and a library of publications and sites of interest. Two publications are available:

Michigan Zoonotic & Vector-Borne Disease Surveillance Summary - Michigan Department of Community Health, Division of Communicable Disease, Zoonotic Disease and Special Projects Section - michigan.gov/emergingdiseases

Ticks and Your Health - Michigan Departments of Community Health, Agriculture and Rural Development, Natural Resources; Michigan State University - michigan.gov/emergingdiseases > [Lyme Disease](#) > [Human Health Issues](#)

Contains a chart of tick-borne diseases, vectors, wildlife hosts, incubation times, and signs and symptoms in humans; prevention strategies for people and pets, and much more.

This fact sheet is provided by the Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health at the Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine as a public service. It is not intended to diagnose any disease. Please contact your veterinary medical service provider if you have questions regarding this or any other veterinary medical issue.

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