

The ticks have been really bad this summer and I am constantly removing them from my pets. Are there new products available or is there anything I can do at home to help reduce the number of ticks my pets are getting?

Ticks are very small external parasites that can have a very large, negative effect on your pet's health. After attaching to their host, they can transmit Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichiosis and other serious infections. A tick bite can also cause skin irritation, severe lameness and even a very sudden paralysis. Ticks are unfortunately very hardy and survive temperature extremes. Some, the Ixodidae family (deer ticks), are very hard and have a shell that cannot be broken by stepping on it.

The first way to protect your pets and yourself from ticks is to take a look at your environment and daily activities. Keep the lawn around your home and play areas cut short. Avoid walks through tall grasses. The CDC recommends you stack firewood neatly and in a dry area to discourage rodents that can carry ticks. It is also important to keep equipment, decks and patios away from yard edges and trees where ticks are more commonly found. Since ticks like to make nests in areas that are undisturbed, remove any old furniture, trash or brush from the yard that may give ticks a place to hide. Ticks do not jump, fly or drop from trees, but latch onto passing hosts from leaf litter, tips of grass, etc. Most ticks are probably picked up on the lower legs and then crawl up the body seeking a place to feed.

One of the best ways to prevent ticks from attaching to your pets is to use a veterinarian recommended product. There are topical liquids that are applied to the skin, commonly between the shoulder blades or in a line up the back. Most of these products start working within hours and last for a month. Frequent swimming and bathing will cause the effective time to be shortened. So far, there are no oral prescription products to prevent ticks, only fleas. There are new, safe and very effective collars available through your veterinarian. These new tick collars are odorless, do not have an annoying powder, are waterproof and work for 6-8 months. If you prefer a more holistic option, please call your veterinarian. She will be able to help you find a more natural product that may be almost as effective at protecting your pets from ticks.

By focusing on your environment and using safe, effective products to protect your pets, you could be tick-free in no time!

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