



## **Tick Talks: Who is really at risk ?**

Ticks are no longer a bug of thick wooded areas. Species of ticks can be found in all areas of the United States. Illinois has four of them. They are the Blacklegged (deer) tick, American dog tick, Lone Star tick, and the Brown dog tick. Since, they are found virtually everywhere in Illinois, not only are our pets at risk but so are we. Here's what you need to know about ticks, where they survive, and most important, how to get rid of these pesky parasites.

Ticks are a small blood sucking parasites that can be attached on a host for up to several weeks if they are not removed. The tick has four life stages: eggs, larvae, nymphs, and adults. Besides the egg, each life stage requires a blood meal to survive. Ticks can feed off of birds, reptiles, mammals and even humans! Thus living on many animals that can be found in your backyard! Ticks spread disease and can lay thousands of eggs at a time. Unfortunately these pests are hearty parasites.

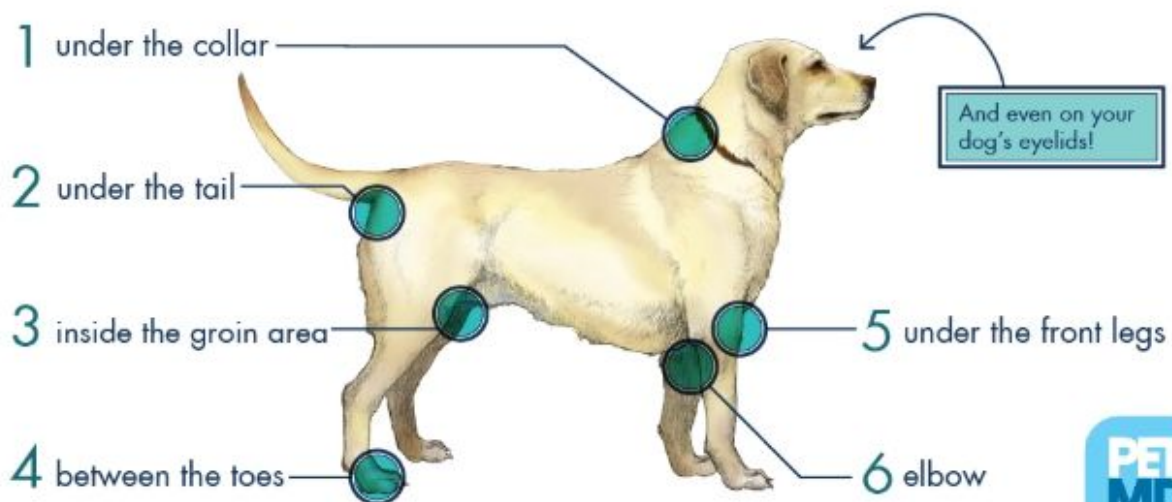
Ticks, unlike fleas, are not fast moving or jumping creatures. They love to climb and crawl on the host. Ticks only need to go a short distance to find their next meal. Most commonly, they find their host when they are brushed up against in tall grasses. They can even fall from a bush onto their host on a windy day. Surprisingly, they particularly enjoy low lying vegetation such as bushes or groundcover which provide coverage from the sun and helps them retain moisture. Regular mowing will help to combat ticks in your yard. The best place to keep

your children's play structures is in direct sunlight and out of wooded areas. In the fall, clearing up leaf litter will also help. Keep in mind, that if a tick gets on your pet you might wind up with ticks in your home.

As far as temperatures for survival, ticks can be found in temperatures above 32 degrees. Most ticks are not as prevalent in dry and super hot environments. They do well in moist climates. However, considering the changes in season weather patterns, South Town Animal Hospital is now seeing ticks starting in late February and all the way through December.

Common places to find ticks are in crevices on the body. On dogs or cats typically they can be found near the ears, neck, groin, or underarm areas. They are often hard to locate at first due to the fact that they are about the size of a poppyseed. As they feed, they become engorged and can often grow to the size of a pencil head or corn kernel. They are black or brown in color and while feeding can appear gray as well.

## Ticks are drawn to dark, moist areas on the body like:



It is especially important that during the warmer months to do a daily tick check on your pets and family members. We love to enjoy spending time outdoors but need to protect ourselves and our family as well. If you are suspicious that a tick is on your pet, call South Town Animal Hospital and we will be glad to help. We can decipher if it is indeed a tick, the type it is and help with removal. Considering ticks attach tightly onto their host, it can be difficult to remove the tick, especially in its entirety. If a portion of the tick is left inside the host it might cause swelling and an infection.

Due to the fact that different species of ticks carry specific diseases, identification is very important. The black legged tick or deer tick carries lyme disease. Lyme disease is a disease that can be given to any mammal. Some of the other diseases are ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and anaplasmosis. When necessary, the doctors at South Town Animal Hospital are here to help with diagnosing and treatment. But the best treatment is prevention.



Schedule an appointment to talk with a South Town Animal Hospital veterinarian about any concerns you may have regarding ticks. They can provide routine blood tests for diagnosing tick borne diseases, vaccines that protect against tick carrying diseases and medications for tick prevention. Tick bites on pets may be hard to detect. Signs of tick borne disease may not appear for 7-21 days or longer after a tick bite, so watch your dog closely for changes in behavior or appetite if you suspect that your pet has been bitten by a tick. Ticks can be harmful and prevention should not be taken lightly. The staff at South Town Animal Hospital is here to help ‘you’ protect your pets and your family in addition to providing your pet’s best preventative options.



For further information on lyme disease or tick borne diseases:

<https://www.cdc.gov/lyme/index.html>

<https://www.wideopenpets.com/7-major-canine-tick-borne-diseases/>