

Myths vs. facts: The truth about ticks

Make sure parasites have no place on your pets.

Disease-carrying ticks pose health risks to dogs and people, no matter where you live. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that ticks in every U.S. state carry diseases, and the number of tick-borne diseases is increasing. But do you know the myths and facts about ticks? Here, DogsAndTicks.com debunks some of the most commonly believed myths about ticks so you can protect your pets.

Myth #1: *The best way to remove a tick is with a lit match, fingernail polish, or petroleum jelly.*

Fact: None of these methods cause the tick to “back out,” and all of them may actually result in the tick depositing more disease-carrying saliva into the wound, increasing the risk of infection.

The best way to remove a tick is to grasp it as close to the skin as possible with tweezers and pull the tick’s body out with a steady motion. Wear rubber gloves, and clean the skin with soap and water after removal. Dispose of the tick by placing it in alcohol or flushing it down the toilet.

Myth #2: *Lyme disease is the only illness that ticks can transmit to dogs and humans.*

Fact: Lyme is the most widely known and common tick disease, but there are many others that ticks carry and can transmit to dogs and people. These include Rocky Mountain spotted fever, anaplasmosis (sometimes known as “dog fever”), ehrlichiosis, and some emerging diseases with potentially devastating effects.

Myth #3: *If I find a tick on myself or someone in my family, Lyme and other tick diseases can be ruled out immediately with a blood test.*

Fact: According to the CDC, laboratory results for tick-borne illness in people are often negative on the first sample and require a second test two to three weeks later to confirm infection. Children are more susceptible to infection due to their immature immune systems.

Signs of Lyme are flu-like symptoms such as fever and malaise with or without a bull’s-eye rash, but many people (and dogs) with tick-borne illness don’t experience any symptoms, especially in the early stages of the disease.



Myth #4: *Ticks aren’t a problem in the winter when it’s too cold for them to live outside.*

Fact: In most areas of the country, high season for ticks runs from April to November. Experts recommend year-round preventives, however, as infection can occur at any time of the year. In the winter, for example, some tick species move indoors and are in closer contact with pets and people, while others make a type of antifreeze to survive during the winter months.

Myth #5: *Ticks live in trees, so as long as I don’t live near or visit a wooded area, I don’t have to worry about them.*

Fact: Ticks live on the ground no matter the locale, be it an urban park or a rural area. They typically crawl up from grass blades onto a host and migrate upward, which is why they’re often found on the scalp.

Myth #6: *Ticks are insects.*

Fact: Ticks are actually a species of parasite called arachnids that belong to the same family as mites.

Since signs of tick-borne disease are difficult to recognize in both pets and people, simple preventive measures and understanding as much as possible about these creepy crawlers are the best ways to keep everyone safe.

Information courtesy of DogsAndTicks.com