

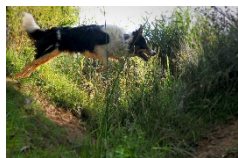
Ticks – why are we concerned and how can we prevent them?

by Harriet Baxter, Chobham Road Vets in Sunningdale

There are over 850 described tick species worldwide and all are blood sucking parasites. They are from the same family as the spider and are second only to mosquitos in transmitting disease. Although not every tick carries diseases, it is thought around 15% of ticks in the UK carry Lyme's disease. Tick saliva has an anaesthetic so your animal won't feel the tick bite, and neither will you!



Lyme's disease is a bacterial disease of dogs, horses and people. In dogs it causes lameness and swollen joints, fever and inappetance. **Babesiosis** is caused by a microscopic parasite that invades red blood cells. It has recently been diagnosed in dogs in the UK. It causes fever, increased respiratory rate, muscle tremors, anaemia, weight loss and in a few cases the dogs have died.



How can we prevent them?

Ticks are abundant in late spring to early summer and again in the autumn but they can be found all year round. We saw our first one at the practice in January this year!

Reducing exposure can help. Ticks tend to live in dense vegetation. They find their hosts by sensing body heat and latch onto the fur of the animal as it passes through, an action known as 'questing'. From the fur they burrow down onto the skin before feeding on the host's blood. Knowing and avoiding tick hotspots can reduce the chance of your animal being affected.

There are many different products available to prevent against ticks but many of the best are only available through your vet or with a prescription. Broadly they come in three forms:

Palatable oral tablets which can, in some cases, provide protection for up to three months

Tick collars, some of which will repel ticks. These can last for up to seven months

Topical 'spot ons'. These usually need to be applied monthly. There are a range of products available but some ingredients can be fatal to cats so make sure you read the label carefully. It can be confusing when choosing the correct product for you and your pet. In addition to ticks we need to bear in mind that we should also be protecting against roundworms, tapeworms, fleas and lungworm. Control for these will often require additional products. If you have any questions, please pop into the practice and a member of the team will be happy to discuss your pets needs with you and advise on the best products for you and your pet.

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