

Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases Fact Sheet

Zoonoses Fact Sheet

Diseases that can spread from animals to people.

What are Ticks?

Ticks are small insects that feed on the blood of people and other animals. There are many different types of ticks in Australia, but the ones we are most worried about in cats and dogs are the **brown dog tick**, the **paralysis tick**, and the **bush tick**.

How do ticks spread?

Ticks live in tall grass and bushes and are most common in the spring and summer. Dogs and cats get ticks from direct contact with ticks in the environment or on other animals. After climbing onto a cat or a dog, the tick will attach itself to the animal's skin and feed on blood.

How do ticks make animals sick?

1. **Blood Loss.** Ticks feed on blood. The more ticks a dog or cat has, the more blood it loses. Large amounts of blood loss can cause anemia, making the animal weak and sleepy. Without treatment, anemia can be life-threatening.
2. **Skin irritation:** Tick bites cause redness, swelling and itching at sites where ticks are attached. Damage to the skin can also make it easier for bacteria to get in and cause infection.
3. **Spreading disease:** Ticks can carry other germs (such as *Ehrlichia*, *Babesia* and *Anaplasma*) that can be passed to animals and people when the tick sucks blood.
4. **Paralysis:** Paralysis ticks have a toxin that causes paralysis, usually starting in the legs and spreading to the rest of the body. Without treatment, the toxin can reach the lungs, making it impossible for the cat or dog to breathe, resulting in death.

How do you treat ticks?

Dogs and cats should be treated with parasite medicines like Nexgard or Bravecto that kill and protect them from ticks for a month or longer. Tick collars are also available and can protect your pet for up to 3 months. All of the pets in the household need to be treated to stop ticks from returning. It is also important to wash bedding, toys and other items where ticks may be hiding. Pet owners can also consider professional treatment for their house or yard with a tick-killing spray.

Can people get ticks?

These ticks usually prefer to feed on cats and dogs, but they can also bite people. Just like with pets, tick bites in people cause skin irritation and itching, leading to scratching and sores. These sores can get infected with bacteria like *Streptococcus*, potentially causing other problems, such as rheumatic heart disease and kidney problems. Ticks can also transmit germs and toxins that make people sick.



For more information or to find resources on zoonotic diseases in cats and dogs, visit our website at www.amrric.org.