

## Do the tick check!

Regular tick checks are an important part of pet healthcare. The longer a tick feeds, the greater the risk of infection. Tick checks can be a relaxing and bonding experience between you and your pet.

People often don't realise that most tick treatments don't repel ticks but kill them once they start to feed. You should still check for ticks and remove them even if they are dead.



Ticks often choose folds of skin or crevices, so examine your pet as thoroughly as possible. Brush against, as well as with, the hair-growth to part it so that any ticks may be seen. Check around and inside the ears, around the eyes and the muzzle, as well as between pads and toes. Unfed sub-adult ticks are dark and flat and can look like scabs or moles.

Even stabled horses and ponies may pick up ticks during a ride, and grazing animals are vulnerable. It's a good idea to perform a tick check when grooming or un-tacking.

## Correct tick removal

When using a tick removal tool, follow manufacturers' instructions. When using fine-tipped tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and steadily pull the tick outwards without jerking or twisting.

Never squeeze the tick's body, burn, freeze, or smother it in substances such as petroleum jelly, spirits or oils. These methods are thought to induce back-flow of fluids from the tick which may contain disease-causing organisms.

The risks of tick-borne disease in pets are increasing. Keeping your pet protected will help to minimise those risks. If your pet is exposed to ticks, you may be too. Visit the BADA-UK website to find out how you can keep yourself, your family and your pets better protected.



## Be tick aware!



[www.bada-uk.org](http://www.bada-uk.org)

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## Ticks and Lyme disease in the UK and Ireland

# Are your pets protected?



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## What are ticks?

Ticks are parasites, meaning they feed on the blood of a host (animal or human). They wait for a host in long grass, leaf litter and on low plants and branches. Ticks don't jump or fly. They climb on as the host rests nearby or as it brushes past them. Special mouth parts and numbing saliva allow the tick to fix itself securely into the skin, where it feeds unnoticed for a number of days before it drops off.



## Where do ticks live?

Ticks can be found in areas such as woodland, moorland and heathland (especially where there are livestock and deer), but they can also be present in town parks and gardens where wildlife visit (such as birds, hedgehogs, foxes and squirrels).

There are more ticks around in spring through to autumn but they can be active during milder winter weather (above 3.5°C), even when there is snow on the ground.

## Ticks can be hard to spot

Many people think of ticks as being quite big and fat (like a balloon) but this is because they are used to seeing a tick after it has fed for several days, when it sticks out of the hair on their pet. Unfed, ticks can be flat and as tiny as 0.5mm (the size of a poppy seed).

## What do I need to know about ticks?

Factors such as changes in farming practices and the climate mean that there are more ticks around now. A range of diseases (such as Lyme disease) can be transmitted from the tick's saliva as it feeds. The site of a tick bite can become inflamed and infected even if the tick itself is not carrying a disease. It is therefore very important to protect your pet from tick bites.



## Lyme disease

Lyme disease (Borreliosis) is caused by a group of closely-related bacteria, collectively known as *Borrelia burgdorferi sensu lato*. Lyme disease is transmitted during the feeding process of ticks when they bite people or animals, including dogs and horses.

## Lyme disease symptoms

Dogs are commonly exposed to ticks carrying the *Borrelia* bacteria, but do not always show symptoms of Lyme disease. However, when dogs become ill their symptoms can be mild to severe. An infection may result in fever, exhaustion, weight loss, depression, joint inflammation and swollen glands. In severe cases, disease of the kidneys, heart and nervous system can result.

In horses, symptoms can include behavioral changes and loss of co-ordination as well as fever and muscle and joint inflammation.

There is currently little understood about Lyme disease in cats but cats can suffer other health consequences from tick bites.

## How can I protect my pet?

Lyme disease, and the other diseases which ticks can transmit, are difficult to treat, so prevention is far better than cure.

There are a number of steps you can take to protect your pet:

- **Use an appropriate tick product**

There is a variety of tick control products available to protect your pets against ticks. Monthly treatment is important to ensure the best possible protection. Some products may be unsuitable for use with pregnant or nursing animals. Ask your vet for advice and always read the manufacturers' instructions carefully before applying any product to your pet.
- **Do the tick check**

Remove attached ticks using the recommended techniques.
- **Vaccination**

A vaccine has recently become available which can be used to help protect dogs against Lyme disease.

Ask your vet about the best ways to protect your pet.

