

Watch Out there are TICKS about!!

Ticks give me and many of you the creeps, possibly because they actually belong to the spider family.

There are over 800 species of ticks worldwide. Ticks can live for several years and each stage of their life cycle requires a blood meal in order to reach the next stage. They lay their eggs in secluded, grassland areas, laying anywhere between 100 – 6000 eggs, depending on the species, these take 2 weeks to hatch. Once hatched, the larvae move up the grass in search of their first blood meal, after which they drop to the ground and moult into the nymph stage. They can remain dormant for a year before finding their next host. Once fed, the engorged nymph drops to the ground and moults, becoming an adult. Another year may pass before the next host is found. Once the adult female finds a new host, she can increase her size by over 100 times. During her 8 to 12 days feeding, she will mate and then drop off to lay her eggs beginning the cycle again.

Pets, and also humans, are exposed to ticks in all country and grassland areas. They are second only to mosquitoes in carrying infectious diseases but can also cause local irritations and allergies – and they do actually hurt when they bite!

Protection for your pet can be given in a variety of ways – see your veterinarian or pet supply store for more detailed information. The most commonly used combination is a Scalibor collar for dogs along with Frontline spot-on. The Scalibor collar gives protection from ticks for 5-6 months, it doesn't stop the tick attaching but will kill the tick within the first 24 hours (reducing the risk of disease transmission), Scalibor also protects your dog against fleas and sandflies (which are responsible for spreading Leishmaniasis). Frontline is a monthly spot-on application for dogs and cats, and is also recommended for the control of fleas. Other combinations of protection are: Advocate combined with the Scalibor collar: Advantix for 3 months and then Frontline Combo for 3 months combined with Stronghold. The choice of combinations give you the option to choose which works best for your pet.

Limiting your pet to exposure can be difficult, they enjoy and need their walks, but regular daily checking of your pet is recommended. If you find a tick, what do you do? Care has to be taken in removing ticks as there is a high risk that the mouth of the tick will be left in your pet, with the associated risk of infection. Pulling with tweezers is not recommended as blood can be pushed from the tick back into the pet as well as the risk of the mouth being left. There are many methods that people suggest for tick removal. But one method that many swear by now is using an O'Tom Tick Remover. This little device retails at about €5, and for that you get a large and small twister. These Twisters slide between the pet's skin and the tick (safely encompassing the mouth). You then twist the Twister around and the tick is removed. Do not then squeeze the tick but dispose of it.

Happy Tick twisting!

Protect your pet with knowledge

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