

# The Nice Dog Walking Weather is here!

## What you need to know about TICKS

[by Dr. Elizabeth McGill]



### Q. What are ticks and what do they look like?

Ticks are blood sucking insects that feed off deer, mice, birds, dogs and other mammals. Before a tick has a blood meal it is the size of a sunflower seed. It can swell to the size of a small grape once it is engorged (full of blood). It can be anywhere from a light tan colour to a dark purple/brown colour. They have four pairs of legs and can be mistaken for a large spider.

### Q. Where do ticks live?

Ticks live in areas with long grass or areas that are forested. A tick can live outside for years waiting for an unsuspecting animal to walk by. Once a tick jumps on an animal it can stay attached for as long as ten days. After the ten days of feeding the tick jumps off and lays her eggs on the ground.

### Q. What time of the year are ticks active?

Ticks generally are most active in April, May and October.

### Q. How would I know if my dog has a tick?

Ticks are common external parasites of dogs. Ticks implant mostly on the head or neck of dogs. Dogs should be checked every time they are walked in long grass or forested areas by parting the hair and examining the skin of the head and neck. Ticks do not burrow under the skin as many people think but sit on the surface of the skin with only their mouth piece burrowed into the skin.

### Q. Are ticks harmful to my dog?

Ticks can carry a bacteria that causes Lyme disease. The bacteria can be transmitted to your dog while the tick is attached. Lyme disease is a serious disease causing joint and kidney disease. Early detection of an attached tick is very important because if it is removed within twenty four hours the tick does not have time to transmit the bacteria to your dog.

### Q. How do I safely remove a tick from my dog?

There are several ways to safely remove a tick. At the clinic we use a little instrument called a "tick twister" that gets under the body of the tick and makes sure the mouth piece is fully removed from the skin. If I am at home with out a "tick twister" I firmly grasp the tick very close to its mouth piece and twist and pull the tick out. It is very important that you do not squeeze the body of the tick or you may inject the contents of the tick into your dog.

### Q. How do I prevent my dog from picking up ticks and getting Lyme disease?

When walking your dog avoid long grass and forested areas especially in April, May and October. When you do get home from walking your dog check for ticks by looking between the hair especially on his head and neck. Call your veterinarian about products that can discourage ticks from jumping on and products that will kill ticks if they do become attached. If you have concerns about Lyme disease get your dog vaccinated.

### Q. Do you take steps to protect yourself from ticks?

When I walk my dogs in areas where I am concerned about ticks I wear long socks and long pants.

### Q. Can I get sick from my dog that has had a tick attached?

People can not get sick from their dog.

### Q. Do cats get Lyme disease?

Cats do not often get ticks because they are such good groomers. They remove the tick themselves before the tick has a chance to implant. Cats are not susceptible to Lyme disease.

**If you have questions about ticks or Lyme disease call your veterinarian. Veterinarians are your best source for pet health.**



Dr. Elizabeth McGill is a graduate of the Ontario Veterinary College. Dr. McGill has been a companion animal veterinarian for 19 years. She works with three other veterinarians at Martindale Animal Clinic which is a full service hospital. Dr. McGill has a particular interest in her older patients. It is with their older patients that they have a tremendous opportunity to improve quality of life.