

Ticks

I have found a tick on a patient – what do I do next?

Ticks should be removed as soon as possible after discovery – this is to reduce the risk of transfer of infectious agents that they may be carrying. The tick may drop off your pet at any time, can survive indoors, and could go on to attach to other pets or people. When removed, in an atraumatic manner, the ticks are still alive and should be stored in a sealed container to prevent escape. Ticks can then be disposed of, submitted for species identification, or submitted for infectious disease testing.

How do I remove the tick?

There are lots of old tales about removing ticks, like covering them in Vaseline or nail varnish or burning them off. None of these are recommended as they can aggravate the tick, lead to skin infection or cause additional trauma and pain to your pet. Specialist tick removal tools (e.g O'Tom Tick Twister) are easily available from your vet, pet shop or online – and are a useful addition to a first aid kit. It is important to ensure that all pieces of the tick have been removed. If you are unsure contact your local veterinary surgery to arrange an appointment.



*Ixodes spp. tick on the head of a cat.
Photo from Sophie Tyler*

Application of tick preventative medication can be useful in preventing further attachment of ticks, and in the removal of other ticks that you might not have found; however, there will be a delay in removal of the tick that you have found permitting transfer of infectious agents, so direct removal is recommended. Tick medication should be applied as recommended on the packet, not directly to the tick, as this might result in ingestion of the product.

NB: some tick preventive medications used in dogs are highly toxic to cats – read the packet carefully, and if in doubt contact your vet. Veterinary tick preventative medication should not be applied to humans.

Can I have the tick identified?

The University of Bristol has an online resource for the identification of ticks of veterinary importance <http://www.bristoluniversitytickid.uk/>. Ticks can also be sent to the [Tick Recording Scheme](#) (TRS), who can identify the species of tick found on your pet, which may help decide

Reception Hours

Mon-Fri 9am - 5pm

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which infections the tick may be carrying. This service is free of charge and further details about the safe removal of ticks and sending ticks for identification are available on their website. The TRS also provides important information regarding ticks found on travelling and imported dogs, particularly regarding the brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*), which is non-native to the UK but can transmit human and animal diseases. This tick has been found on travelled dogs in the UK and can survive indoors.

Can I have the tick tested for infectious diseases?

Public Health England do not routinely test individual ticks submitted to the TRS for infectious agents (such as the bacteria that cause Lyme borreliosis). Ticks obtained from pets can be submitted to Langford Vets Diagnostic Laboratories for testing for infectious agents (NB: there is a charge for this service). However, rates of detection of infectious agents in ticks varies seasonally and geographically, and the presence of an infectious agent does not necessarily mean that transmission will have taken place.

Last reviewed July 2021 by Emi Barker

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