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Tip Of The Tail

Ticks

Ticks—the real vampires of the world. No, they don't turn you into a vampire, but they can pass on diseases to you and your pets as they suck your blood. In Florida, there are several species, but the common ones found on dogs are the brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*) and the American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*).

Deer ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*) that carry Lyme disease do occur in Florida, but the disease is only occasionally contracted in the state.

The brown dog tick is the common tick that invades our homes in large numbers. After engorging itself on the dog, the female tick drops off and lays 1,000 to 3,000 eggs that hatch in 19 to 60 days. The eggs hatch into seed ticks that feed on the dog, drop off—molt into the nymph tick (a little larger) that feeds on the dog and then drops off and develops into the adult that again feeds on our pets. Serious canine diseases are carried by these ticks including ehrlichiosis—causing fever, lameness, and anemia; and babesiosis—causing fever, anorexia and anemia. It takes several hours of feeding



to pass these diseases to the dog so it is important to remove the ticks as soon as possible to prevent these diseases and to prevent the female from laying eggs. Ticks are not just ground creatures, but they climb bushes, trees, furniture and walls. Fortunately, these ticks rarely bite humans, so in most cases of heavy home infestation the owners are not a likely target.

The American dog tick is mainly an outdoor tick and do not occur in large numbers in the house. They, however, do like both humans and dogs. They can carry Rocky Mountain spotted fever, which can infect both humans and dogs. They also can carry a neurotoxin that can cause tick paralysis. It can be severe and possible deadly, but resolves quickly when the tick is removed. These ticks can lay 3,000 to 6,000 eggs at a time.

As you can see, ticks multiply in large numbers and can become a large problem quickly. Besides causing skin irritation and itching, ticks can carry serious diseases. They are harder to get rid of than fleas. The best way to remove small numbers of ticks is to use tweezers close to the skin and remove slowly in order not to leave the head. If they are deeply imbedded you can slowly twist them out.

For prevention of ticks, several products for your dog are available. The best one is the Preventic collar which works for about three months. Other topical products applied monthly are also available and can usually be used with the collar as well. Infestations of ticks can occur with a female

laying thousands of eggs or products such as yard mulch bringing ticks into the yard. If infestation occurs, these products are important for the pet, but environmental treatment is also necessary. Due to the life cycle of the tick, the environment needs to be treated every three to four weeks for two and three treatments. Professional pest control people are the best bet to get rid of them.

For tick control on your pet, recommendations for treatment and the possible diseases caused by ticks, your veterinarian is a great source for information.

Established in 1981, Palm City Animal Clinic is dedicated to providing the best possible care for your pets. With focuses on compassionate care in surgery, physical therapy and rehabilitation, preventative medicine, extensive diagnostics and emergency service, Palm City Animal Clinic combines exceptional medical care with a caring philosophy for pets and their owners. For more information, call (772) 283-0920, visit www.palmcityanimalclinic.com or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PalmCityAnimalClinic.