



## The Ugly Truth About Ticks

### Connie's Weekly Newsletter

While attending a training session on flea and tick products in Chicago, I realized just how little I knew about the biology of ticks and the science behind the products animal welfare organizations and pet owners use to control them. There are only four species of ticks in the United States and Canada and every state or province is home to at least one species. The brown dog tick is the most ubiquitous, found throughout the U.S. and Canada, and one of the most important carriers of canine diseases across the world. The blacklegged tick, commonly referred to as the deer tick requires a local population of deer to survive, and is probably best known for causing Lyme disease in humans. The lone star tick is most commonly found in wooded areas and can reportedly cause people to develop an allergy to red meat, and the American dog tick or Rocky Mountain wood tick can cause paralysis in cases of heavy infestation and in rare cases, death, although the condition dissipates when the ticks are removed from their host.

Ticks are unable to jump like fleas so they must climb and “quest” for prey. This involves, reaching out from their perch with front limbs extended until an appropriate host, like a dog or person, moves within grasping distance. Interestingly, ticks are rarely a problem for cats due to their grooming habits.

According to current market research, when it comes to people, pets, and pests, the public can handle fleas but is completely “freaked out” by ticks. This probably fits into your own experience of daily phone calls from distressed adopters frantic about a tick on a newly adopted pet. The ShelterCare Gift of Insurance program covers treatment for internal and external parasites and reminding adopters of this key benefit is always a good idea!

Removing ticks from their environment, be it a home or shelter, is not easy. Due to prolific procreation (1,000s of eggs per female) and the nature of their life cycles the entire process takes six months. Animals must be treated every month for six months as new waves of eggs hatch hungry ticks eager to latch on a pet. Although it can take up to 48 hours to kill them all, the majority of today’s tick treatment and prevention products kill 98% of ticks within the first 12 hours.



However, treatment doesn’t stop there. To rid a facility of a tick infestation requires treatment of the environment as well. If your organization experiences this issue, contact a pest control service for assistance. You can also purchase Cyfluthrin to treat the building, and any bushes or shrubs around it that might be concealing questing ticks.

There are many products available to treat pets and prevent ticks; however, alongside the dangers of ticks themselves, it’s important for you to be aware of the unwanted and potentially dangerous side effects of some tick prevention products. Pymethrine is the active ingredient in at least two tick products on today’s market and can be lethal for cats, so much so that close contact with a dog being treated with pymethrine can be enough to cause fatality.

The active ingredient amitraz is also an MAO-inhibitor and should not be handled by people with diabetes. It can also have adverse affects on individuals already taking a prescription MAO-inhibitor (such as Prozac), even resulting in hospitalization. It can be found in combination with flea-preventing ingredient metaooflumizone which has been linked autoimmune disease in dogs. Although this product has been taken off the market, you may find it has made its way to your organization via donations.

Despite these dangers, there are a variety of widely available, safe products we can use against ticks. No longer limited to sales through the veterinary channel, the cost of these products is also declining, welcome news to many AWOs that spend thousands of dollars on flea/tick prevention annually. Competition within the market is also increasingly with beneficial effects on price. The release of the PetArmor and PetTrust Plus generics (using #1 veterinarian-recommended active ingredients fipronil and ivermectin/pyrantel) has opened the doors to substantial savings for animal welfare groups.

#### **Did you know?**

**Get 25 standard microchips and a case of PetTrust™ Plus heartworm prevention FREE when you purchase two cases of PetArmor® flea and tick prevention medications.**

**Check out this and other Olympic-size deals in the PetPoint Post.**

Sincerely,

Connie Howard  
Director Animal Welfare Relations  
Pethealth Inc.  
Office: 1-866-630-7387 ext 617  
Mobile: 1-720-459-0959  
Email: [connie@petpoint.com](mailto:connie@petpoint.com)