



Ticks, dogs and disease

Connie's Weekly Newsletter

It may be a bit later than expected, but spring finally seems to be upon us. Unfortunately, this also means the start of the tick season, both for humans and for their pets. This tiny parasite carries a host of different and potentially fatal diseases, and can cause an infestation that is difficult to eradicate. But when exactly is the risk of dogs picking up ticks the greatest, and are your pets or family at risk?

Ticks are found throughout the world, and in North America, every state or province is home to at least one species. [Click Here](#) to learn more about the different species and risks each pose.

To help quantify the risk posed to dogs, Georg Duscher and colleagues at Vienna's Institute of Parasitology at the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, conducted a study providing evidence that links the rise in temperatures to the increase in ticks amongst dogs. The data, published in the online journal *Parasites & Vectors*, was taken from the 700 ticks found on 90 dogs that were regularly walked in the same area in eastern Austria. Although different species of ticks are known to strike at various times, results concluded that dogs have the highest risk of picking up ticks during the months of March through to November.

During their work on ticks in eastern Austria, the scientists at the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna made another very interesting observation. On humans, ticks are known to select particular sites for attaching and sucking blood, wandering over our bodies until they find somewhere warm and sheltered to feed. While it is widely assumed that the same behavior is shown by ticks that feed on dogs, Duscher and his team of researchers discovered that the ticks seem to be largely confined to the heads, shoulders and chests of dogs, presumably the places where the ticks first arrive on the animals. "Their body shape makes it difficult for them to crawl through dense fur, so ticks probably attach close to where they arrive rather than risking being knocked off by vegetation," said Duscher.

In another related article, from the same publication, Michael Leschnik and colleagues tested the effectiveness of common anti-tick measures at preventing tick-borne infections in dogs. Their research results suggest that owners should be more careful when using a tick preventive and always read and follow the label.

When analyzing blood samples from the 90 dogs in the study, Michael Leschnik of the Vetmeduni Vienna's Small Animal Clinic was able to show that more than half of the dogs had become infected with one or more of the pathogens causing disease during the duration of the study.

Disappointingly, the chance of being infected did not seem to be reduced by the use of an acaricide, either alone or together with a repellent however, Leschnik was quick to qualify this finding, pointing out that "the poor performance of the drugs in our study may relate to low owner compliance. Many owners only applied the spot-on drugs after finding ticks and they did not use the drugs often enough. The efficiency is much higher under laboratory conditions, so we should try to raise the owners' awareness of how to apply the products correctly."

Working in animal welfare, we are well versed with the frantic calls from adopters who have found a tick on their beloved newly adopted pet. A helpful reminder is that the 24PetWatch Gift of Insurance has coverage for both internal and external parasites. In addition to the Gift of Insurance, you can also better prepare your adopters and generate more revenue for your organization through the sale of PetArmor®. PetArmor is the leading generic flea and tick treatment with the same active ingredient, fipronil as the leading competitor. PetArmor, which is approved for use to control all four tick species, provides the user an affordable alternative to the pricey brand name giants found on the market today. Why pay extra to subsidize the advertising of these brand names when you can benefit from the same great protection at a fraction of the cost? PetArmor comes in either a three dose pack, or single dose packs, offering a price point that is affordable for all, and is the perfect purchase to help protect a newly adopted animal.

The risks posed to both animals and humans are not insignificant, and with treatment of an infestation taking up to six months, prevention is key. Fortunately, there is a wide variety of products available on the market that are safe, efficacious, and cost effective. Treating the dogs in your shelter early on before the rise of tick season, while continuing treatment as directed, will allow you to better protect both the humans and animals in your care.

Did you know?

With our busy summer season fast approaching, ensure your organization stocks up on microchips and MiniChips, which will earn more entry ballots towards our **24PetWatch in Vitre 2013** contest, sponsored together with Allflex. [Click here](#) for contest updates and how you can participate.

Sincerely,

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