

# Ticks and Tick-Borne Disease

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**For the first time in recent memory, and perhaps the first time ever, we have identified a tick on one of our patients in the month of March. Not only that, but the tick located was of a species that is known to carry the Lyme disease bacteria (*Borrelia burgdorferi*).**

The “tick season” in Calgary typically has not begun until May or later but it now appears to be an early-Spring problem. Tick prevention, long thought to be of little importance in our region, should now be considered a critical component of our dogs’ preventive health programs.

## **How Do I Protect My Dog From Ticks?**

There are many preventive products available and some have proven to be highly efficacious when used properly. This year, we are recommending a product called a *PrevenTic* collar. This is a temporary collar that is impregnated with an insecticide called amitraz which prevents the attachment of ticks for 3 months, and detaches existing ticks before they can transfer disease-causing organisms. Unfortunately, the *PrevenTic* collars are not yet available through our distributors but should be within the next few weeks. Please feel free to call for an update. For the time-being, we are recommending using a product called *Defend* until the *PrevenTic* collars are available. *Defend* is only safe in dogs and should be used with caution in households with cats. *\*\*Please note that PrevenTic collars are not labeled for use in cats but are considered considerably safer in a cat household than other similar tick preventives.*

## **What Do I Do If I Find A Tick On My Pet?**

The old myths about burning off ticks with heat or the application of chemicals such as nail polish removers are actually bad ideas. When ticks are stressed by these types of actions, they can actually inject more bacteria into the pet, increasing the risk of tick-borne disease transmission. The best thing to do if you find a tick on your pet is to call us here at Bow Bottom Veterinary Hospital and we will remove the tick for you. Tick removal is not as easy as it may seem and, if done improperly, can result in leaving the tick mouthparts behind. These mouthparts are where bacteria tend to colonize in order to increase their chance of transmission to an appropriate host such as your pet or even you.

## **What Other Risks Do Ticks Present?**

In addition to Lyme disease, ticks are known to spread many other diseases including anaplasmosis, ehrlichiosis and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. All of these diseases are potentially fatal to both pets and people. Anaplasmosis, while not as well-known as Lyme disease, is actually more common than Lyme disease in Canada. Dogs can also suffer from tick paralysis, which is caused by a neurotoxin produced by certain ticks while they are feeding. Tick paralysis can be fatal but symptoms generally resolve quickly once the tick is located and properly removed.

It is time to educate ourselves about the risks of tick-borne diseases. They are real concerns and are now being identified in Calgary and other areas of Alberta and Western Canada. For more information, please feel free to contact our office at 403-278-1984 or [welcome@bowbottomvet.com](mailto:welcome@bowbottomvet.com).

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