

Tick-Borne Disease

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Whether your dog accompanies the family hunting, or just hunts down backyard creatures, he will more than likely be exposed to ticks. Ticks transmit disease-causing microorganisms to pets and humans alike.

Diseases Affecting Blood Cells

There are several diseases that ticks can transmit to your dog that affect his blood cells. These diseases include those caused by *Bartonella*, *Babesia*, *Ehrlichia* and *Anaplasma* microorganisms. Symptoms of these blood-borne diseases include fever, anemia, low platelet counts, and weight loss. Some also affect the joints. Treatment includes antibiotic therapy and blood transfusions for the more severe cases.

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

A common disease is Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF), transmitted by the American Dog Tick, Rocky Mountain Wood Tick, and the Brown Dog Tick. The microbe that actually causes the disease is a bacterium called *Rickettsia rickettsii*. RMSF is often manifested by neurological signs (dizziness, seizures), as well as abnormal bleeding, lethargy, and muscle and joint pain. There is antibiotic treatment for this disease, but dogs with severe neurological problems may not recover completely.

Lyme Disease

The most common disease caused by ticks is called Lyme disease, named after the town in Connecticut where it was first diagnosed in the 1970's. A tiny, common deer tick (also called the black-legged tick) carries the *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria that cause the disease. The deer tick must be attached to the host for 24-48 hours for the bacteria to be transmitted. Dogs show several different forms of the disease, but by far, the most common symptoms are fever, shifting leg lameness, swelling in the joints, lethargy, and lack of appetite. Unfortunately, symptoms do not usually appear for two to five months post-exposure.

Lyme disease usually responds readily to antibiotics, but damage to joints can be permanent. Lyme vaccination in tick-infested areas is an important part of preventing Lyme disease. There are several Lyme vaccines on the market that are approved for use in dogs. However, since vaccines may not be 100% effective and there are no vaccines available for the other tick-borne diseases, tick prevention is still recommended.

Tick Prevention

All in all, it is much simpler to prevent ticks from attaching to your pet or to be diligent about removing them when your pet is in high tick areas such as forests or fields, than to treat a tick-borne disease.. With the advent of [once-a-month topicals](#) and insecticides, tick control has become a lot easier and more effective. [Tick collars](#), such as the [Seresto Flea and Tick Collar](#), have been shown to provide effective tick control.