# Tick Control and Prevention

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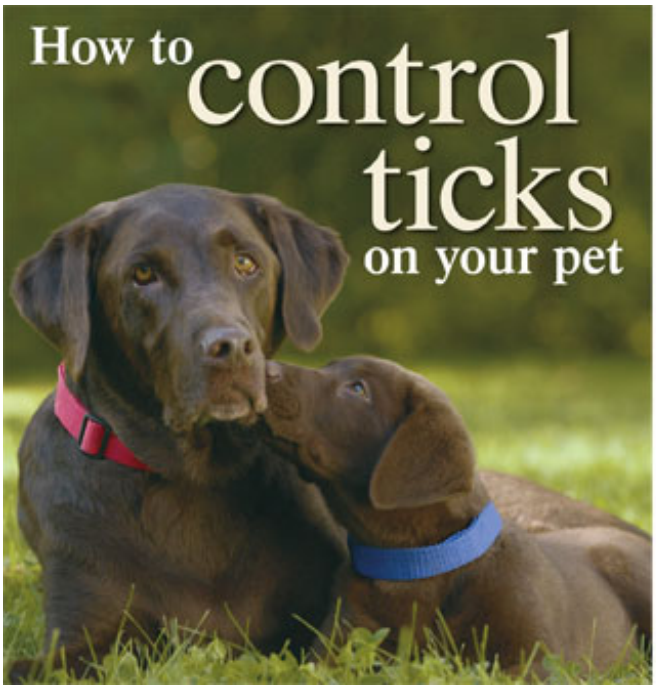


Ticks can cause a variety of medical problems for your dog, including Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. In large enough numbers, ticks can cause dangerous amounts of blood loss, especially in young animals. An effective tick control program is essential to your dog's good health, and always involves treating both the environment and the animal.

## Environmental Tick Control

Tick control in the environment generally involves treating the yard and kennel areas. We prefer an environmentally-safe spray containing fenvalerate for this purpose. Follow product directions carefully. You may need to spray every 7 to 14 days during peak tick months. Remember that cold, frosty fall weather does not kill ticks (in fact, that is when deer tick numbers are usually at their peak), so treat your yard well into the fall and early winter. Regardless of the product used, remember not to spray where runoff could go into lakes or rivers. Removing leaves and clearing brush and tall grass from around the house and kennel areas can also help reduce the number of ticks.

The Brown Dog Tick, *Rhipicephalus sanguineus* is the most troublesome tick in kennels and yards and is found almost everywhere. It can complete its life cycle in about 2 months, and although uncommon, it can become established indoors. If you do encounter an indoor tick problem, use a flea and tick fogger, spray or powder. Fog as you would for fleas. In the house, ticks tend to crawl to a higher area (like they do in grass). They may be found in cracks around windows and doors. Because of this tendency and the fact that ticks crawl, and do not jump or fly, another option is to apply a 1-foot barrier of insecticide such as a flea and tick spray or powder where the carpet meets the wall around the entire room. As a result, ticks moving to the walls to climb higher will come in contact with the insecticide and be killed. And, finally, remember to wash your pet's bedding regularly.

## Tick Control on Your Pet

There are many tick control products for pets, including once-a-month topical products, sprays, powders, dips, shampoos, and collars.

**Once-a-month Topicals:** Once-a-month topical insecticides are applied to a small area on the back of the pet, are probably the easiest product to use, and generally, last the longest. Some kill fleas and ticks, and others just fleas, so check the label carefully. Ingredients generally include permethrin, pyrethrin, or fipronil. Examples of these products include Bio Spot® Defense Spot On® for Dogs and Frontline Plus. Do not use a product containing permethrin on cats, as it can be deadly.

**Sprays:** Flea and tick control sprays can come as aerosols or pump bottles. Most cats prefer the pump bottles, since the hiss from the aerosols may sound too much like the hiss of another cat. If you are going to use an aerosol spray on a cat, it may be helpful to spray a cloth with the product (away from the cat), and then rub the cat with the cloth. When using a spray, you do not have to soak the pet with the spray, but be sure to spray all parts of the animal. Spray a small amount on a cotton ball to apply the product around the eyes and ears. Do not get any of these products in the eyes. Follow your veterinarian's and the manufacturer's directions on how often to spray, and spray in a well-ventilated area. Sprays often contain permethrin or pyrethrin. Do NOT use products containing



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**Powders:** Powders are generally easy to apply but can create a mess. If you or your pet has asthma, powders may not be the best choice of product since the powder could be inhaled. Be sure to use powders in well-ventilated areas. Powders often contain pyrethrin.

**Dips and Rinses:** Dips and rinses are applied to the entire animal. They generally have some residual activity. They should be applied in a well-ventilated area according to your veterinarian's and the manufacturer's directions. It is helpful to put cotton balls in the pet's ears and ophthalmic ointment in the pet's eyes. Even with these precautions, be very careful not to get any of the product in the pet's ears or eyes. Dips and rinses may contain permethrin, pyrethrin, or organophosphates. Do NOT use products containing permethrin on cats.

**Shampoos:** Flea & Tick Shampoo helps to primarily rid your pet of the ticks he already has on him, although some have residual activity. To properly use a flea and tick shampoo you must be sure to work the shampoo in over the entire body and then leave it on at least 10 minutes before you rinse it off. This is true of almost any medicated shampoo. Again, remember to protect the eyes and ears of the pet. (HINT: Cats often do not like *running water*. It is often better to pour water over a cat with a large pitcher.) Shampoos often contain pyrethrin.

**Collars:** Flea & Tick Collars can be effective, but must be applied properly. To get the right degree of snugness, you should just be able to get two fingers between the collar and the neck of your pet. Be sure to cut off any excess portion of the collar after you have properly applied it. Otherwise, that animal, or other pets may try to chew on the end. Check the package for information on duration of effectiveness since many collars lose effectiveness when they get wet, e.g., if your dog swims a lot. Watch carefully for any irritation under the collar. If this occurs, you may need to use a different product. As mentioned above, the Preventic Collar does an excellent job controlling ticks.

While flea and tick products do a very good job of preventing infestations or controlling an existing problem, none are 100% effective all of the time. It's always a good idea to check your pet for ticks occasionally, especially after a trip to the woods or grassy field. If you do find an attached tick, read our article How to Remove a Tick before going it on your own.

**One last point:** If deer ticks and Lyme disease are present where you live, you may want to consider administering a Lyme vaccine to your dog to provide that extra protection. Your veterinarian can tell you if this extra precaution is a good idea for your area.



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