

Mountainview Animal Hospital

SPRING NEWSLETTER

The Bottom Line

- *Ticks carry disease that can make both people and pets sick.*
- *Ticks will feed off more than one host, so ticks that come home on the dog or cat can bite people too.*
- *Blood testing dogs for tick transmitted disease gives us important information about your pet's health AND the prevalence of these diseases in your neighbourhood.*
- *Tick prevention in dogs, helps to prevent ticks from coming into your home environment.*
- *Testing your dog for Lyme disease, Anaplasmosis and Ehrlichiosis can be done annually with your dog's Heartworm disease blood test. If you are concerned about your dog's exposure to these diseases through ticks, ask us about the 4DX blood test.*

PARASITE SEASON - THE NEW TICK OUTBREAK

This time of year stimulates a new enthusiasm for life. The days are getting longer, the sun shines warmer, and migratory birds return to the area. And by migratory birds, I meant robins, but I guess the Canadians who over-winter in Florida are returning too. Even the animals seem a bit more perky this time of year. The spring time grooming appointments are being booked to trim off the mat of fur that has developed over a long cold winter. Soon every Shih Tzu, Yorkie and Doodle will be sporting their new, brightly coloured bandana. How can anyone put a damper on all these good things? Well unfortunately, I can, kind of. As a veterinarian, I also see spring as the beginning of parasite season. It, for me, is also the time when I start to have those talks with my clients on how to best protect their pets, and themselves, against those tiny, but dangerous insects that seek to harm them. It seems over the decades, there are far more dangerous parasites now than there used to be in this region. It used to be just the flea, then heartworm came along; and it was far more dangerous than the flea. Now, we also have to discuss the tick, and wow, there are suddenly a lot of ticks out there.

While not nearly as dangerous to dogs and cats as heartworm disease, the tick has certainly gotten the public's attention. Perhaps because ticks are an external parasite, so unlike heartworms, we can see them on our pet, or perhaps it is because ticks are so ugly. Certainly, from the human health point of view, the tick is definitely a looming threat.

What are ticks?

Ticks are small parasites belonging to the Arachnid class, so they are related to spiders and mites. There are over 900 different species of ticks in the world. They tend to prefer warm moist climates. There are four stages to their life cycle: the egg, the larva, the nymph and the adult. They require a host to complete their lifecycle, the number of hosts required depends of the type of tick, and can vary from three to seven. Ticks can be found feeding from mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Where did all these ticks come from?

We have known for a while that the tick *Ixodes scapularis* (Deer tick or black legged tick) had an established population on the north shore of Lake Erie. Over recent years the geographic area where ticks can be found has spread; most likely from migratory birds carrying the ticks back with them from the United States. In addition to the Deer tick, *Dermacentor variabilis* (American dog tick) is also becoming more prevalent in Ontario. Of course, the ticks also require the right environment, climate and host to establish themselves in an area.

The Deer tick prefers damp environments and as such is most often found in the leaf litter under trees in wooded areas.

The American dog tick is much more commonly found in fields and long grassy areas. This is the tick we have seen most often the past few summers in Georgetown.

The Bottom Line

Over recent years the tick population has been growing in Southern Ontario. We have certainly seen an increase in the number of ticks we find on dogs brought in to our hospital for examinations.

Ticks carrying Lyme Disease have been found in all 10 Canadian provinces and 48 continental USA states.



Engorged tick on dog



Unfed



Day 1 ½



Day 2



Day 3



Day 4



Day 7

Adult female *Ixodes scapularis* (Deer Tick) growth comparison as she feeds on a host mammal

Why are ticks dangerous?

Ticks are like little vampires, they bite to feed off the blood of their host. Their bite does not hurt, so the host is unaware that this ugly little creature is using them for dinner. As a result, a tick can remain attached and feeding for several days before it is engorged (full) and falls off into the environment. In large enough numbers, the tick can cause anemia, and damage the wool and hides of livestock. They also transmit a number of very devastating diseases, both to animals and people.

While there are dozens of diseases that can be transmitted by the tick, in Canada we are mainly concerned with Lyme Disease, Ehrlichiosis and Anaplasma. Lyme disease being the most common in Ontario. Lyme disease is spread by the Deer Tick.

Lyme Disease

Lyme Disease is actually caused by a spirochete type bacteria called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. It is picked up by the tick while feeding on infected rodents. If an infected tick then bites a dog or human, it can transmit the bacteria. Lyme disease can be a devastating disease in humans if not detected and treated appropriately. In dogs, the disease can behave much differently.

Fortunately, only about 5 - 10 % of dogs infected with *Borrelia burgdorferi* actually become sick with the disease. It is not yet understood why so many dogs seem resistant to becoming ill. However, for those unfortunate few who do become sick, the disease can be quite devastating. The signs tend to develop 2 - 5 months after the infection and can include painful swelling of the joints, fever, swelling of the lymph nodes, lethargy, kidney disease, heart disease and sometimes even neurological disease.

When detected early, Lyme disease can be treated with certain types of antibiotics. Of course, prevention is always worth a pound of cure. For dogs, there is a vaccination for Lyme Disease. This vaccine is not given as part of a dog's routine vaccination protocol. Instead, we tend to vaccinate only those dogs that travel to, or spend time in areas where Lyme Disease is very common. The most commonly used prevention for Lyme Disease is tick bite prevention.

PREVENTION AND SCREENING - the good news

Annual blood testing for Lyme disease: The only real way of knowing the risk of a disease, is to test for it. The information we get from any test, allows us to make the best possible decisions for your pet's health. Dogs that have been bit by a tick or frequent areas that might have ticks, should be tested for tick transmitted diseases annually.

The 4DX test can be run on a small sample of your dog's blood and it tests for Lyme disease, Ehrlichia, Anaplasma and Heartworm disease. How efficient is that!

Dogs that test positive for Lyme Disease but are not showing symptoms of disease, will be monitored closely. Dogs showing symptoms of Lyme Disease will be treated appropriately for a quick recovery and return to health.

Tick prevention: There are a number of veterinary approved products available to prevent or kill ticks:

1. Topical tick repellants: Topical medications are applied monthly onto a dog's skin. The repellant spreads itself over the dog's body. The ticks tend to avoid jumping on dog's with this product, and those foolish enough to do so anyway, begin to die before they have a chance to bite. Advantix K9 is the most effective product for tick prevention. It also works against fleas. This is a great product, however, some dogs do not like the sensation of the topical application. This product is toxic to cats, so household cats should be separated from the dog for 12 to 24 hours after application.

The Bottom Line

Tick bite prevention in people:

- Avoid deep bush or tall grassy areas unless you are dressed properly.
- Wear light coloured clothes, this makes it easier to see the tick as it is crawling up.
- Wear socks and shoes that cover the entire foot.
- Wear long pants and tuck the bottoms into your socks.
- Wear long sleeved tops that fit tightly around the wrist and neck.
- Use tick repellants. Clothes can be impregnated with Permethrin and DEET insect repellent should be sprayed on the skin. Follow the manufacturer's directions. Use with caution on children.
- Check yourself and others for ticks. Pay particular attention to behind the knees, groin, underarms and scalp.
- If you have been bitten by a tick, remove the tick, save the tick in a container and call your doctor.

2. Oral medications: This medication will be absorbed into the blood stream. When a tick bites, it ingests the medication along with the blood meal. This will usually kill the tick in 24 to 72 hours. Some people prefer the oral medication over the topical ones because they find them less messy, smelly and they are safer for the cats that might share our dogs lives. The side effects are minimal, but some dogs will vomit after receiving a dose of this oral medication. And, there is some controversy as to whether the product kills the tick fast enough to avoid disease transmission.

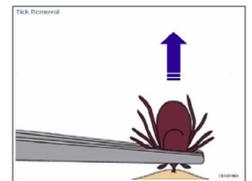
Please talk to us about which product will work best to avoid tick infestations in your dog.

What if my dog has been bitten by a tick?

1. **Remove it:** If you find a tick attached to your skin or that of your pet's remove it immediately. The longer the tick is attached, the more likely it is to transmit disease. Remember, there are many different species of ticks and not all ticks carry the same diseases.
2. **Test it:** Once the tick has been removed, keep it. It is important to have the tick identified and if it is the right species, tested to see if it is a carrier of disease. Ticks removed from a human should be taken to a local health unit. Ticks removed from your pet can be brought to us for testing.
3. **Blood testing the bitten dog:** If the tick itself is not tested for Lyme disease, then your dog can be. This blood test should be done six weeks after the known tick exposure to be accurate.

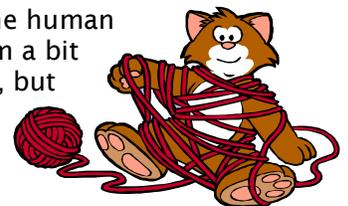
How to remove a tick:

- Using tweezers, carefully grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull the tick straight out.
- Do not squeeze the tick, this may increase the potential for disease transmission from the tick into your pet.
- Check to see that the head and mouth parts have come out with the body. If you are unsure if you have completely removed the tick from your pet, call us to have him/her examined. Mouth parts that are left behind can cause an infection.
- Place the tick in a container.
- We strongly recommend having the tick species identified and tested to see if it is carrying the Lyme Disease causing bacteria.
- Thoroughly clean the bite area with rubbing alcohol and/or soap and water.



TIME WITH TUX

Well, I'm 7 years old this month. Not very old, I realize, but still time to start working smarter not harder. So, I've come up with a new means of transportation...the human back. I don't mean being carried, because then the humans hug me and kiss me, ugh. I mean riding on their backs. If timed correctly, they don't see me coming and I jump on them. Sometimes, I even jump from one human to another, to reach my desired destination. At first they seem a bit startled, particularly if I hitch a ride on an unsuspecting client, but most get over the shock and oblige me. Some of the silly humans even think its cute and encourage me.....its a brilliant strategy! Kind of like the cat version of Uber.



The Bottom Line

An infected dog can have over 200 heartworms in the heart and adjoining blood vessels.

The drug companies that produce the various heartworm preventative medications will guarantee your dog's protection only if you use the medication correctly and have your dog's blood tested every year.

Most boarding facilities will require your dog to have had a Kennel Cough vaccine at least five days before admission.

Many puppy training facilities are also strongly recommending the Kennel Cough vaccine to their clients.

Leptospirosis is a Zoonotic disease; meaning people can become infected too.

Caution! Some flea products marketed in the pet stores to dogs are extremely toxic to cats. Always read the label carefully; better yet, ask us about choosing the safest products for your pets.

!!! CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. WICK !!!

Those of you who have been in to the clinic lately will likely have noticed that Dr. Wick has been growing a baby bump. She and her husband Dan are expecting a baby boy any day now. While we are so happy for her, we will miss her terribly during her maternity leave. We look forward to having her back full time, this time next year. We wish her and Dan all the joy, love and blessing in becoming new parents.



IMPORTANT SUMMERTIME REMINDERS

Heartworm Disease

Heartworm disease is caused by a large worm which can live in a dog's heart and adjoining blood vessels. Permanent and potentially fatal damage to the heart, lungs and liver can occur long before there are any visible signs.

Fortunately, prevention is so easy. Simply give your dog the preventative medication once a month from June through November. Blood testing your dog prior to starting the medication is an important part of prevention and is strongly recommended.

Leptospirosis Vaccine

Leptospirosis is a serious and sometimes fatal disease that can afflict dogs of all ages. Dogs most commonly become infected by drinking from rivers, streams, puddles or ponds that have become contaminated by the urine of other infected animals (raccoons, rats and skunks). Leptospirosis tends to attack the liver and kidneys causing a variety of symptoms including fever, nausea, lethargy, abdominal pain and increased urination. Many dogs afflicted with Leptospirosis will die from it. If your dog has access to wildlife, roams free, or drinks from water sources that may have become contaminated, he or she should be vaccinated against Leptospirosis this spring. We would be happy to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of vaccinating your dog against this disease.

Kennel Cough Vaccine

Bordetella bronchiseptica, better known as Kennel Cough, is a bacterial infection that causes tracheobronchitis. Affected dogs will exhibit a characteristic dry, harsh, hacking cough that can last up to 3 weeks. Some dogs can develop a serious pneumonia that may require them to be hospitalized. Dogs are most commonly infected in kennels, pet stores, exhibitions, grooming salons and off leash parks where they are in close contact with other dogs. Vaccination is recommended for dogs going to boarding kennels, puppy classes, grooming facilities or off leash parks. If your dog is not vaccinated against Kennel Cough and is likely to be exposed, please call us to schedule an appointment for a vaccination against *Bordetella bronchiseptica*.



Fleas



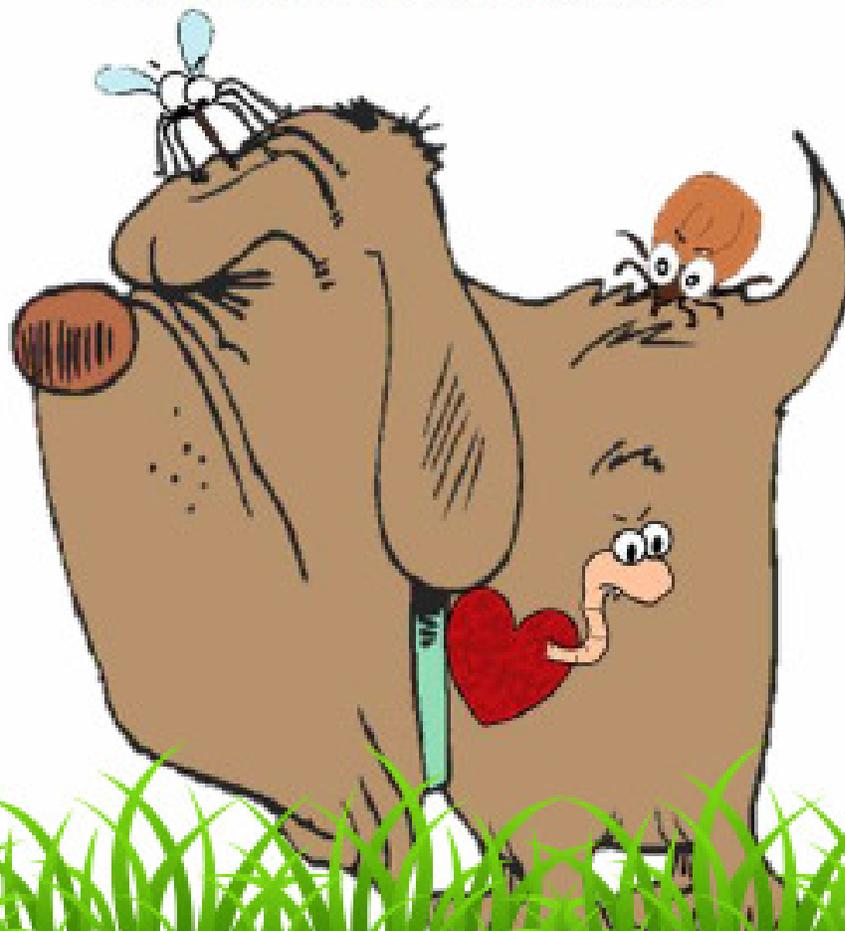
Both cats and dogs are at risk of becoming infested with fleas during our warm summer months. Fleas are extremely irritating to your pet. Flea bites can cause itchy skin rashes and even serious allergic reactions. Left untreated, just 10 adult fleas can multiply to over 250,000 fleas in only 30 days! Your pet can come into contact with fleas on walks, at the park, or even in your backyard. Those of you who have had fleas in the past know how difficult it is to get rid of them; prevention of flea infestations is much easier, cost effective and safe. Call us to start your pet on the safest and most effective flea prevention this spring.

Seasonal Tick Promotion

The only way to understand the prevalence of a disease in an area is to test for it. So, in the interest of understanding our risk of Lyme Disease in this area, Mountainview Animal Hospital is offering a Lyme Disease testing promotion!

From now until JULY 31, 2017 every dog that gets a HEARTWORM TEST will get a FREE UPGRADE to the 4DX TEST at no extra charge!

The 4DX tests for:
Heartworm & Tick Diseases



Call us at 905-702-8822 to get your pet tested!