

Lyme Disease

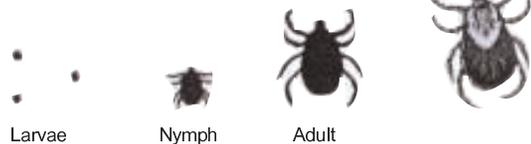
People often think of Lyme disease as a threat to humans, but it is also a threat to dogs and cats. If you own a pet, you have probably encountered a tick at some point.

Ticks carry disease. Two ticks commonly found in Connecticut are the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) and the dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*). Fortunately, dog ticks do not carry Lyme disease in Connecticut.

Black-legged tick Midwest & Eastern U.S.



American dog tick Throughout the U.S.A.



Lyme disease is caused by the bite of an infected deer tick. Deer ticks are tiny, about the size of a pinhead. They live for two years, pass through four life stages, and need a blood meal to pass from larva to nymph to adult. They feed on humans and many types of animals, including dogs, cats, cattle and horses.

Ticks can easily hide unnoticed in your pet's fur. Always look for and remove ticks! Pets can become infected with Lyme disease or other tick-borne diseases. They also can carry ticks into your house where they can attach to humans and transmit diseases to your family.

Canine Lyme disease

Lyme disease can affect pets differently. Some animals may show subtle symptoms while others may show none at all. Prevention is the key to eliminating Lyme disease in your pet. Always run your hands through the coat of your pet when it comes inside. You will usually feel a bump where the tick is attached.

Pet(s) Can't Tell You What is Wrong!

In pets, symptoms of Lyme disease are hard to recognize and often, may be confused with other illnesses or old age. Be observant of you pet's actions. It is the only way to know if your pet has contracted Lyme disease if no tick was found.

Symptoms of Canine Lyme disease include:

- Limping (usually one foreleg) - progresses over 3 to 4 days. Once the dog starts to be affected by the bacteria, Lyme disease can progress from a mild discomfort to the stage where a dog will be in such joint and muscle pain it will refuse to move. In addition, the bacteria can affect the dog's heart muscle, nerve tissue, eyes and kidneys.
- Lymph node swelling in the affected limb.
- Lameness.
- Fever.

If the disease is diagnosed in time, antibiotic treatment can cure the dog before permanent nerve or joint damage occurs.

Dogs treated within the first week of symptoms will respond rapidly to treat-

ment. Antibiotics are administered for four to six weeks.

Feline Lyme disease

Cats can get Lyme disease too, although it is less common, possibly because they tend to groom the ticks off themselves before they attach. Indoor cats are less likely to contract Lyme disease, but even they are not immune. Lyme disease does not appear to pose a major threat to cats. Its most dangerous feature is that it may go unnoticed and undiagnosed.

If your cats are outside unattended, check them daily for ticks just like you would your dog. Seek veterinary care at once if you suspect your pet has Lyme disease.

Symptoms of Feline Lyme disease include:

- Little movement for days at a time. Your cat will be unwilling to get up and move around or it will cry when being picked up.
- Hesitant about jumping or climbing stairs.
- Limping or seeming unwilling to allow a limb to bear weight.
- Pain in muscles and joints.
- Fatigue.
- Fever.
- Loss of appetite.

Feline Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics which are effective if

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treatment is started early. Cats which may have had Lyme disease may become reinfected through subsequent tick bites.

Prevention of Lyme disease in Your Pet(s)

- Conduct daily pet checks! Check pets for ticks after each outing, especially between toes, around eyes and ears, and skin folds. Prompt and appropriate tick removal will prevent transmission of the Lyme disease bacteria.
- Pull off the ticks you find carefully. Use thin-tipped tweezers or forceps and grasp where mouth parts enter the skin. Pull upward in a slow, steady motion. Do not squeeze tick or use other methods of removal. Clean bite area with an antiseptic or soap and water.
- Reduce the tick population around your home by making simple landscape modifications. Refer to Target Lyme Disease "Get Your BackYard in the Zone" brochure for effective recommendations.
- Walk your pets in the center of trails to avoid overhanging brush. Dogs and cats should be kept from roaming into brushy areas and leaf piles. Dogs should wear a flea and tick collar.

- Keep cats indoors. Cats should wear a flea and tick collar or be treated with a tick repellent available through your veterinarian.
- Use a veterinary tick-control product. These products absorb into the skin and allow approximately 30 days worth of protection against ticks. Sprays, collars, powders and dips can be used as an alternative. Multiple products should not be used at the same time and product should be formulated for your pet (dog or cat).
- Use flea and tick shampoo if needed.

No repellent will keep every single tick off of your pet. **Conduct daily pet checks** on all indoor and outdoor pets and remove ticks promptly before disease can spread.

Note: Ticks can enter your home on clothing or on other outdoor pets. Ticks can live in your home for several days before dessicating (drying up). Avoid sleeping with your pets and check them daily for ticks.

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WESTPORT WESTON HEALTH DISTRICT
180 Bayberry Lane • Westport
Phone (203) 227-9571 • Fax (203) 221-7199
Website : www.wwhd.org

**Dogs and Cats
Get Lyme Disease Too!**