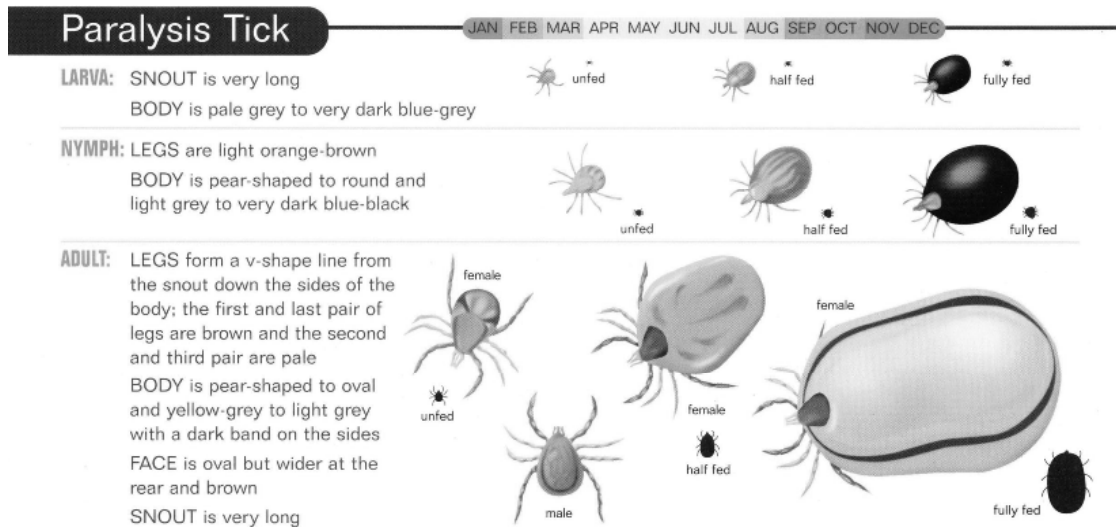


Paralysis Ticks and Your Pet

The paralysis tick, *Ixodes holocyclus* is common in this area. It is found throughout the year but is especially common between June and December.

Adult ticks grow from the size of a pinhead to the size of the nail on the little finger. They have eight legs, the first and last pairs being dark brown, and the body is pear shaped. The body is usually yellow-grey to light grey with a darker band down the sides.



Location and Removal of Ticks:

Ticks are found all over the body. Special places to check are around the head and neck, the orifices (bottom & mouth) and between the toes. To check for ticks remove the collar and run the hands against the fur, feeling for unusual lumps. Wash with an effective tick rinse to kill any ticks which you may not have been able to locate.

Remove the ticks immediately with forceps (tweezers) or grip them firmly between the fingernails and pull. They will be easier to remove if they have been killed by application of a tick rinse. If you cannot remove the whole tick do not panic as the tick will be dead and the head (which is sometimes deeply embedded) is rejected by the body in the same way the body rejects a splinter.

The poison remains active in the system for 1-2 weeks after the tick has been removed. This means that your pet may continue to get worse for up to two days after the tick is removed. If your pet shows the above signs of poisoning, it is important that you contact a veterinary clinic for advice about necessary treatment.

Symptoms of Tick Poisoning:

Tick venom causes muscular paralysis in warm blooded mammals (dogs, cats, sheep, cattle, goats, horses etc.) and this can often be fatal.

Early Signs:

- Inappetance (food is not eaten)
- Vocal changes (Husky cough/bark, shrieky meow)
- Mild ataxia (Wobbly hind legs, inability to jump)

Advanced Signs:

- Expiratory grunt (forced breathing out)
- Severe ataxia (swaying, falling over, can't stand)
- Salivation (drooling, tongue sticking out)
- Vomiting
- High blood pressure (nervous, distress & panic)

These symptoms progress to full paralysis and death!

Treatment of Tick Poisoning:

Animals showing symptoms of tick poisoning should be examined by a veterinarian to determine the severity of toxicity and the extent of treatment needed. Early treatment greatly improves the animals' chance of survival.

If a tick is removed and the animal is showing no sign of poisoning observe the animal closely during the next 24 hours and keep it quiet. Exercise or excitement can cause the condition to get worse. Do not give food or water during this period. The throat is one of the first areas to be paralyzed and this stops the animal from swallowing properly. Food or water may find its way into the lungs and could cause pneumonia.

Animals showing the above symptoms usually require an injection of tick antiserum to counteract the venom produced by the tick. This treatment does not induce immunity against further poisonings. Treatment also includes a sedative which helps lower the high blood pressure caused by the tick's venom. Prolonged cases also require antibiotics and intravenous fluids.

So that changes in the condition of your animal can be monitored and immediate attention given it is usually necessary for the animal to be hospitalised. The recovery of your pet requires that it be allowed to rest and not be excited by family activities.

Most animals show a response to treatment within 24-48 hours. This period may be extended or the poisoning may be fatal if the animal is large or is badly affected.

When Your Pet Comes Home:

Keep the animal quiet and restrict exercise for two weeks or a temporary relapse may occur. Offer food and water in small amounts only for the first few days or until you are certain it can swallow properly. Monitor the animal closely so that any further ticks are found early.

If symptoms recur, contact the veterinary clinic immediately as further treatment may be necessary.

Prevention of Tick Paralysis:

Your animal should be searched daily for ticks. Although not a guarantee, a tick rinse weekly will reduce the susceptibility of your pet. Dogs can wear Kiltix collars or have Advantix or Frontline Plus applied fortnightly. Proban tablets can also be used every second day to prevent tick paralysis. Cats should have Frontline Plus applied regularly.

A natural immunity builds up in animals that are frequently exposed to ticks. This does not last very long and depends on total exposure. Putting ticks on your pet will not stimulate this immunity.

*Animals suspected of tick poisoning should be kept **cool, calm, quiet and confined** and be given **no food or water**.*