

Tick Control for Cats

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Tick control is not unlike that used for fleas in that there are no shortcuts, no sure cures, and the battle must be on-going. Tick control is a two-step process, in that measures must be implemented to treat both the environment and the pet. Ticks, despite all their legs and ugliness are not hard to kill.

Reduce ticks in the environment

Tick control in the environment generally involves removing tick habitat. Removing leaves and clearing brush and tall grass from around the house and kennel areas can help reduce the number of ticks.

Because rodents, deer, and other animals can harbor ticks, it is important to control these animals as well.

Remember the cold, frosty fall weather does not kill ticks, and in fact, that is when the deer tick numbers are at their peak. In Northern, Wisconsin, the best time to contract Lyme Disease is during September, October, and November since the deer tick is the primary carrier. The point here is that environmental control needs to continue into the fall and early winter.

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, then use a flea and tick fogger. 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 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 the pet's bedding regularly.

Tick control on your pet

Keeping pets out of grasses and woods helps to reduce their exposure to ticks. But any animal outside can quite easily have a tick crawl on board. Perform a "tick check" on yourself and your pets after returning from being outside.

Products that kill and repel ticks are often needed. Products for pets are many and varied and include 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, etofenprox, or fipronil. Examples of these products include Bio Spot-Spot On for Cats, Bio Spot-Spot On for Dogs, K9 Advantix II for Dogs, and Frontline Top Spot. Revolution, which contains selamectin, is a monthly topical product that controls American Dog Ticks (*Dermacentor variabilis*) only.

Permethrin should NOT be used on cats. Instead, use a product containing pyrethrin, imidacloprid, or fipronil.

Sprays: Flea and tick control sprays can come as aerosols or pump bottles. 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 (use on dogs only, not on cats) or pyrethrin. Note: 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.

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: 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 usually contain permethrin (use on dogs only, not on cats) or pyrethrin.

Shampoos: Shampoos help to primarily rid the pet of the ticks it already has on it, although some have residual activity. To properly use a flea & 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: 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. Watch carefully for any irritation under the collar. If this occurs, you may need to use a different product.

Collars containing the ingredient amitraz, such as the Preventic Tick Collar, have very good efficacy, but can only be used on dogs. Do NOT use amitraz-containing collars on cats. Other collars contain ingredients such as carbamates and pyrethroids, some of which can be used on cats.

Do NOT use collars containing amitraz, permethrin, or organophosphates on cats.

Remember, with any tick preventive you use on your pet, the ticks must actually be in contact with the active ingredient to be killed by it. For instance, if you only use a tick collar, you may see ticks attached and feeding on the pet, even directly under the tick collar. This has to happen for the tick to take in the insecticide and die. A good tick collar will kill the tick in 24 hours or less. This greatly reduces the risk of tick-transmitted diseases since it generally requires more than 24 hours of attachment for disease to be transmitted.

Tick control in the outdoor environment generally involves eliminating the habitat in the yard and kennel areas where ticks are most likely to occur. Ticks tend to prefer tall grass and brush from which they can more easily get onto an animal. To help prevent tick exposure, try to keep your pet from entering brush and tall grass. Keep grass cut short. Discourage deer from entering your yard.

Tick control for you

The following recommendations on tick control for people have been made by the federal government's Center for Disease Control:

It is best to avoid tick-infested areas especially during the times of peak tick numbers such as spring and late fall. If you are going to walk through areas where ticks could be a problem, wear a hat, long-sleeved shirt, and long pants. Tuck your pant legs into socks or boots, and tuck your shirt or blouse into your pants. If you wear light-colored clothing you will be able to spot ticks more easily. Try to walk in the center of trails to avoid long or overhanging grass and bushes. Spraying insect repellent containing DEET on your clothes and exposed skin, except for your face, will help. For more information, see <http://www.cdc.gov/ticks/prevention.html>.

When you come in from the outdoors, remove your clothing and wash and dry it at a high temperature. It is a good idea to inspect yourself carefully for any ticks. If you find an attached tick, remove it carefully. Check out our article ['How do I safely remove a tick?'](#)