

# Beware of the variety of ticks in animals

by Marguerite Lantham

Ticks (suborder Ixodides) are external parasites of large wild and domestic animals. Although no species is primarily a human parasite, some occasionally attack man. They are not insects, but belong to the arachnida class, as do spiders, mites and scorpions.

They have four pairs of legs, no antennae or wings and two body parts. About 300 species of ticks occur around the world. Soft ticks have a leathery integument; they have no headplate and the head is on the underside. Hard ticks have a hard plate above the head and the head is directed forward.

Most hard ticks, such as the red-dish rabbit tick prevalent in the desert foothills, live in fields and woods, but a few, such as the brown dog tick, are household pests. Hard ticks damage the host by drawing large amounts of blood (a heavy infestation can cause anemia) and by transmitting diseases.

Soft ticks differ from hard ticks by feeding intermittently, laying several batches of eggs, passing through several nymphal stages and living in the home or nest of the host rather than in fields. Soft ticks also carry diseases. The blue bug is pre-

sent in the desert foothills, preying mostly on wild animals.

The life cycle of the tick makes it extremely hard to control. Hard ticks, such as the rabbit or dog tick, attach to the host with their mouth parts and feed continuously for several days, increasing from a mere .02 of an inch to as much as one inch in length and turning grey

brunch with forelegs extended, ready to attach to any animals brushing past. The odor of butyric acid, emanating from all mammals, stimulates the larvae to drop onto and attach to a host.

After filling themselves with blood, the larvae detach and molt, becoming eight-legged nymphs. Nymphs also wait for a suitable



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in color.

Upon penetration the tick secretes a protein saliva that causes extreme itching.

When engorgement is complete, the female drops from the host and finds a suitable place to rest and lay her eggs (as many as 5,000) in a mass. She then dies.

Six-legged larvae hatch from the eggs and move up on grass blade or

sprays, dips and shampoos. Of these three, the all-over dip is probably the most effective.

Ticks should be removed from the animal as quickly as possible. However, an engorged tick has already introduced any disease organisms it might carry.

Ehrlichia, a disease brought to this country from Asia by canine corps dogs, is a serious threat to all canines. Symptoms are high fever, loss of appetite and depression. A dog showing these symptoms should be taken to a veterinarian for diagnosis and treatment.

Wherever warm-blooded animals exist, the tick proliferates. Because it is considered negligible in the animal kingdom, it is somewhat overlooked and given slight attention by entomologists. Host animals would probably disagree!

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Have you noticed how the leaves on many Ironwood trees are turning an ochre color and drooping from the trees? This is nothing to worry about. The trees are not dying but are preparing themselves to give us a lovely show of pale lavender flowers.