

Tick Populations Troublesome for Dog Owners

With more tick-borne diseases and migrating tick populations, the fight against ticks has become a year-round battle.

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Usually considered a seasonal problem, ticks and tick-borne diseases have become year-round threats to our beloved dogs.

According to Michael Dryden, DVM, a Kansas State University professor of veterinary parasitology, warmer temperatures, increasing white-tailed deer populations, reforestation, and urban sprawl have all led to tick migrations and a surge in tick-borne infections.

The rapid change demonstrates the mutability of parasites and the diseases they carry. "Whatever you considered about ticks, their location and tick-transmitted diseases five years ago, it is going to be different today and continue to be different in five years based on these factors," Dryden says.

With the increasing population of white-tailed deer comes the increase of deer ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*), the primary transmitter of Lyme disease in eastern North America, which can now be found from Minnesota to Florida, from Texas to Maine, and from Kansas to Virginia. Dryden says, "That means Lyme disease and/or other diseases associated with deer tick, such as anaplasmosis, may exist throughout all of those regions."

As tick populations migrate to new areas, the number of different tick-borne diseases increases. Matt Eberts, DVM, has seen a rise in coinfections, when dogs are infected with more than one tick-borne disease, which "are making treatment for tick-borne diseases more difficult," says Eberts.

Another reason cited for the tick-borne disease incidence is that people and their pets are spending more time outside, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To protect your dog from potential disease, the Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC) recommends year-round heartworm, flea, and tick preventatives, for all areas of the country.