



## AMERICAN DOG TICK (WOOD TICK)

### DESCRIPTION

The adult American dog tick is a hard tick, 1/8-3/16" long, and reddish-brown with white markings on the back. The mouth is easily seen when viewed from above and the body is flattened, shaped like a teardrop. When feeding, the female's shield-like area remains unchanged, but the rest of her body stretches and changes from red-brown to blue-gray as she engorges with blood. Unlike the adults who have eight legs, the larva is 1/32" long and has six legs with red markings near the eyes. It is pale yellow when unfed, turning slate gray and doubling in size when engorged. It molts into an eight-legged nymph that is yellow-brown with red markings near the eyes and 1/16" long when unfed and also doubles in size when engorged with blood. It may take several years to go from egg – larva – nymph – adult.

### HABITS

This tick is a three-host tick, meaning that it requires different and successively larger host animals in order to complete development. It is a very common pest of dogs east of the Rocky Mountains and readily feeds on a variety of other animals, including humans. The American dog tick can carry Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and can cause tick-induced paralysis if it attaches to a host.

Larval and nymphal activity begins in the spring and continues until mid-summer. Nymphs are more abundant during the summer period. Adults mainly are active in the spring when they are found in "waiting positions" on vegetation along paths and trails. They attach to passing animals, begin to feed, and mate.

### CONTROL

The American dog tick does not survive indoors for long and is seldom a problem in structures except when it occasionally falls off an infested pet. It cannot complete its life cycle indoors. If ticks are found inside, most of them can be removed by vacuuming, and the remainder controlled by applying a residual spray or dust in the areas frequented by the affected animal. Ticks on the pet should be treated on the same day.

Outdoor control of American dog ticks is often necessary. Debris and ground cover around the home should be removed to discourage rodent and other small animal activity. Using traps and/or baits should help eliminate rodent populations. Cutting high grass and weeds will reduce many tick harbouring and questing areas. Barrier sprays and perimeter applications of properly labelled residual pesticides to all vegetation along paths, trails and grassy areas may be needed in order to reduce the magnitude of the problem.

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Individuals who work or spend time in tick-infested areas should protect themselves by wearing light coloured long sleeve shirts and long pants, tucked into their socks and by treating their clothing and skin with DEET based repellents. Attached ticks should be carefully removed so that the head is not broken off and left imbedded in the skin. Proper removal includes using tweezers at a 90-degree angle to the skin, grabbing the tick at the skin level and slowly pulling it straight out. There are tick removal devices available as well, called “tick keys”.

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