

# Ticks and Your Pets

Why it is important &  
What you can do



United Veterinary

## TICKS

Ticks are insects that attach to animals and feed on their blood. The brown dog tick is the most common tick found in Singapore.



*Fig1: Brown Dog Tick (Rhipicephalus sanguineus)*

### WHAT CAN TICKS DO

Ticks have barbs in their mouth that can sink into an animal's skin to suck on its blood. This will cause severe pain and itch to the affected animal. An infestation of ticks can lead to hair loss, skin irritation followed by secondary bacterial infections.

Ticks are also very important because they can spread a group of diseases known as 'tick fever'.

### TICK FEVER

#### WHAT IS IT

Ticks are carriers of 3 organisms which all can cause tick fever. When an infected tick bites into an animal, it will allow the organism to pass directly into the animal's bloodstream.



## TICK FEVER

### WHAT IS IT CAUSED BY

Tick Fever can be caused by 3 different organisms

1. Babesia
2. Ehrlichia
3. Anaplasma

These organisms when transmitted lead to a dysfunction of the immune system. This in turn causes breakage of the animal's red blood cells, damage to white blood cells as well as loss of platelets (clotting cells). Infected animals tend to present with anaemia (low red blood cell counts) which in turn can lead to other clinical signs.

### WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

- Fever
- Depression, lethargy
- Reluctance to eat
- Bleeding
- Pale Membranes
- Discoloured Urine (Reddish/brownish)
- Jaundice
- Weight Loss
- Enlarged lymph nodes

## HOW DO WE CONFIRM IT

Diagnosis of these diseases is done with a collection of results. It involves looking at your pet's symptoms, performing blood tests to look for any infection or compromise in body function of your pet as well as blood tests to determine if your pet has indeed been exposed to the organism.

## TREATMENT

The treatment protocol for tick fever is dependent on the type of organism your pet is infected with as well as the severity of disease. Drugs are available to target and kill the organisms themselves. However, depending on the severity of disease, other supportive measures including blood transfusions, fluid therapy or oxygen therapy may be required.

## PROGNOSIS

The prognosis of these diseases is dependent on the severity and chronicity of which the animal has been affected. Most animals with proper management do well and survive. However, the prognosis is worse if the animal is in a chronic stage of disease.

## TIPS FOR PREVENTION

1. The best way to prevent against tick fever is to use **tick prevention products** such as
  - Anti-Tick treatments
  - Anti-tick sprays
  - Tick collars

Tick Prevention Treatments/Products are the most recommended as they ensure constant protection of your pet for a dedicated period of time. Products with different applications, coverage and application frequencies are available on the market for tick prevention. Check with our veterinarians and we can help you choose the right product for you and your pet.

Anti-tick sprays and tick collars are also available in the market. However, these do not appear to be as efficacious. Anti-tick sprays do not provide a constant protection but are useful only when ticks are present on the body.

2. A **daily check for any ticks** can aid early identification. It is important to look around the neck, groin, armpits and between the toes. If you identify any ticks on your pet, it is best to remove them within 24 hours to minimize tick fever transmission.



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