

Removing a tick



Ticks are blood-sucking parasites that can affect your cat, especially if it goes out in the countryside or grassy areas during the summer and autumn months.

What is a tick?

Ticks are blood-sucking parasites. Most live in damp areas on plants and climb onto animals from time to time to feed. Your cat can pick them up on their coat whilst out hunting. Once on your pet they take a big bite of skin and hang on! When the tick first gets on to your pet it will be small (about the size of a pin head) but as they suck blood they start to swell and within a few days they will be the size of a pea. This is often when you will notice them and they can be mistaken for a bluish wart or growth. Once the tick has finished feeding it will let go and drop off your cat of its own accord after about a week. Most ticks found on dogs and cats are sheep and deer ticks.

Do ticks harm my pet?

Whilst ticks are feeding, the skin around them reacts and can get quite sore. Sometimes the skin becomes infected. Ticks can also carry diseases, eg Lyme disease, and pass them on to your cat.

Should I remove the tick?

Most cats will not remove the tick themselves even if it is making them sore. The longer the tick stays on your cat the more sore the skin will get. If there are only one or two ticks on your cat then you can try to remove them yourself. However, if there are more then you should see your vet for help. It is essential to take great care removing ticks to ensure that the tick jaws are not broken off and left in your pet's skin. If they are they can cause a serious infection or skin reaction (tick granuloma).

If you are not sure if you can remove a tick correctly, get your vet to show you how to do it.

How do I remove a tick?

The head and jaws of the tick must be removed from the skin along with the tick's body. You may well have had plenty of advice from well-meaning friends about the best way to remove a tick, eg burn it off with a cigarette end, suffocate it with butter, etc. Your vet will be able to give you a spray or 'spot-on' solution that can be applied to your cat's skin to kill the ticks. Once dead the ticks will drop off of their accord. The only reliable method to physically remove a tick is to grasp it as close as possible to your cat's skin, with a pair of tweezers and twist and pull firmly away from the skin whilst rocking it back and forth gently. There are specially designed tick-removers which are very effective.

Can I soothe the skin?

In most cases any soreness or swelling will go down over a couple of days. If the skin is very red you can use a mild antiseptic cream to soothe it. If the reaction looks very red or weeping and doesn't get better within 2 days ask your vet to have a look.

How can I protect my cat from ticks?

Your vet will be able to advise you on a spray or 'spot-on' treatment that will deter ticks from biting your cat. When your cat comes home in the summer and autumn, always check them over thoroughly and remove any ticks you find.

If you want any other information on health issues concerning your cat please contact Hampden Veterinary Hospital on 01296 423666 and we will be happy to advise you.