



Dr. Jessica Taylor completed her Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from North Carolina State University in 2000, and her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2006.

As a member of Guilford Jamestown Veterinary Hospital, she is looking forward to helping owners strengthen the bonds with their pets through preventative care and education. Her special interests include cardiology, pain and arthritis management, and endocrine diseases such as diabetes. Dr. Taylor is a member of the American and North Carolina Veterinary Medical Associations.

Dr. Taylor lives with her husband, two beautiful daughters, a lazy hound dog, Indiana, and a very bossy, but adorable cat, Theo. She enjoys volunteering in her church and the community, including with Feral Cat Adoption and Placement. In her rare free time, she loves spending time with her family, especially outdoors, running and reading.

## Ticks! You, your pet and ticks - what you need to know

*The weather is warm, the sun shining and the ticks are biting! This may not be what you're thinking as you step out for a nice walk with your four legged friend, but you should. Our pets are constantly at risk for many diseases from pests and parasites. Here is what you need to know about ticks.*

What are ticks?

Ticks are not insects, but arachnids, and have eight legs. However, nymphs, or baby ticks can have 6 legs. Ticks do not fly or jump, but wait on grass, leaves and twigs, and sense when an animal or person is nearby through breath, vibrations and odor. They crawl onto the host as it brushes up against the object. We have ticks all year in North Carolina, not just during warm months!

Ticks need to feed to survive. Unfortunately, ticks feed on blood. They attach themselves by burrowing under the first layers of skin and help themselves. Gross, right? It gets worse! While feeding, the tick can release certain bacteria, viruses, and organisms from it's insides into the host's skin and blood stream, potentially causing an infection.

Infection?! What kinds of infections?

Ticks are known to transmit several serious and potentially life threatening diseases. Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Ehrlichia, Babesia and Anaplasma are just a few of the diseases that can be transmitted by ticks. These affect pets and people, and are serious health concerns in many areas. In North Carolina, we are seeing an increase in Lyme disease, as well as being a hot-bed for Ehrlichia and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Finally, ticks can also cause localized skin infections at the site of attachment.

Just because you find a tick, it doesn't mean that your dog has one of these diseases. But, the sooner we find out, the easier we can treat a problem. Be sure to let your veterinarian know if you have

removed ticks from your pet, especially if they are not feeling well. We now have fantastic tests that are often part of yearly heartworm screenings and can detect many of these conditions. Early detection is key! But prevention is even better...

How do we keep them away?

Ticks are like little armored tanks - sneaky, dangerous, and difficult to kill. Thankfully, there are good tick prevention products out there to help. Your family veterinarian can discuss which option would be best for you and your family.

**Oral preventatives:** Within the past year, new products that kill ticks with an oral pill have come on the market. These are very exciting because they will work if your dog goes swimming often or has sensitivities to the topical products.

**Topical products:** There are numerous effective topicals that provide monthly tick control. Newer, veterinary strength options often kill ticks faster than some of the over the counter products. It is important to follow the directions carefully, as well as the weight range and species guidelines. Many topicals for dogs can be very toxic to cats.

**Tick Collars:** Tick collars can be effective in helping to repel ticks, and can often be used with other products for extra tick control in high risk areas. However, tick collars need to be fitted properly, and usually do not work when wet. Many collars are toxic to cats, so check with the veterinarian if you have both cats and dogs.

I found a tick!! What do I do?

No prevention is 100%, and many products require that the tick bite before it can die. Our hope is that we can kill the tick quickly, before it has time to transmit any diseases. If the tick is dead, it means the product is working! We still need to remove the tick as soon as possible. There are many old-wives tales and remedies, but please don't try them. Stick to the simple act of pulling it out for the best chance of removal and least chance of infection.

1. Part the hair around the tick to get a good view.
2. Use a pair of fine tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible.
3. Use steady, upward force to pull the tick out. Do not twist or yank.
4. Clean the area with mild soap and warm water and monitor for any swelling or redness.
5. Do not try to burn, suffocate or crush the tick!



If you are not up to it, or ticks just really gross you out, just call your veterinarian. Most are happy to remove the offending tick for you and discuss what you need to monitor for your pet. If you remove a tick, you can dispose of it by placing it in a jar with some alcohol.

We all love sharing the outdoors with our pets, and our state provides ample options for exploring. Armed with knowledge about ticks and other parasites, we can better protect our pets and enjoy the time together!



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