



Nanango Veterinary Surgery

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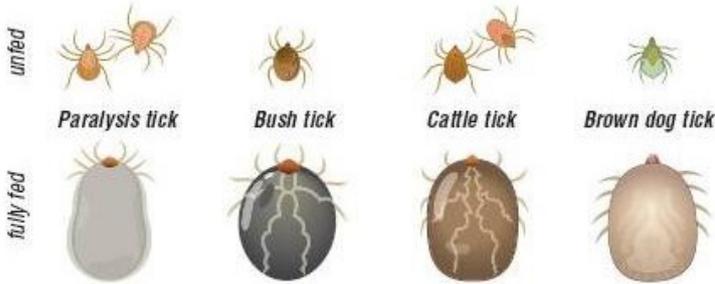
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Tick Paralysis

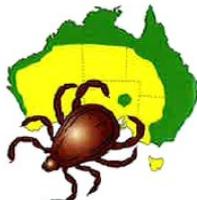


The paralysis tick (*Ixodes holocyclus*) is a tick native to Australia. Ticks are parasites that feed on the blood of your pet. Other types of ticks don't cause paralysis but can cause severe blood loss in heavy infestations.

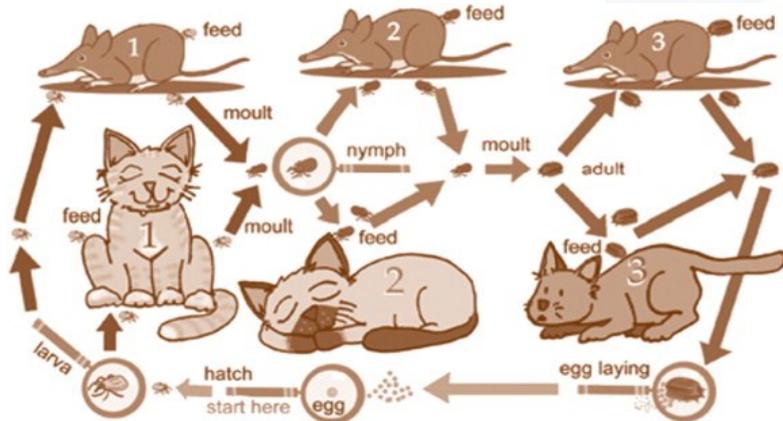
Paralysis Tick

Brown Dog Tick

Bush Tick



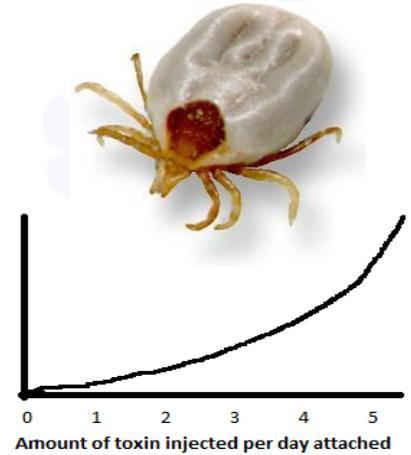
Bandicoots are the tick's natural hosts. Bandicoots commonly inhabit scrub, rainforest and thick bushland. They are not affected by the tick's toxin. Other native and our domestic animals are accidental tick hosts. The tick has 3 life stages: larvae, nymphs & adults that all need to attach and have a blood meal before turning into the next stage or laying eggs.



The most active time for adult ticks is in spring months, especially a few weeks after rain., and before a heat wave of summer. After crawling onto the host animal, the tick burrows its mouthparts into the skin to start feeding on the blood of the host. It cements in its mouthparts which can break off on removing the tick, causing a local reaction that is very irritant.



Adult ticks attach for around 5 days before dropping off to lay eggs. The tick injects poison with its saliva, which progressively paralyses the host

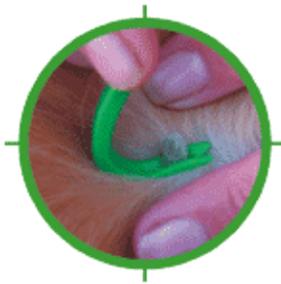


animal, generally from the hind legs forwards, with signs occurring 24-36 hours after attachment, as the poison is slowly absorbed through the lymph. The toxin also causes the lung tissue to produce a large amount of fluid and can stimulate vomiting. Hence an animal with fairly mild symptoms can bring up a lot of mucous and phlegm which is often inhaled to give lung infection. The toxin continues to work on the animal even after the tick is removed and the animal can become a lot more severely affected in this time.

Be alert for signs of tick paralysis :
 Weak or paralysis of back legs.
 "Drunken" gait
 Change in voice or coughing
 Vomiting or gagging
 Panting or changed or difficult breathing
 Salivation
 Listless, tired or depressed
 Off food



Tick antiserum is produced in laboratories near Lismore in NSW. Ticks are placed on dogs (Beagles) in a staged way until they can cope with about 50 live ticks. They become super immune with high antibodies. Their blood is collected, the serum removed and purified, bottled, then sent out to save sick animals around Australia.



“Tick paralysis is very difficult to treat due to the unpredictable nature of the disease.”



Medical Treatment

Treatment of tick paralysis centres on the administration of tick antiserum to your pet. This treatment is usually rewarding, however the earlier your pet is treated, the better their chances of a complete recovery.

Advanced cases of tick paralysis cannot be guaranteed successful treatment.

Hospitalisation of the patient is almost always necessary, and in advanced stages of paralysis, intensive care may be required. Oxygen supplementation may be used to ease the effort of breathing, and forced ventilation may be required. Control of regurgitation is needed to stop oral fluids going down to the lungs. Antibiotic coverage is used to prevent pneumonia. The difficulty of breathing and swallowing can be very stressful to the patient so mild sedatives may give relief. The inability to drink and swallow safely mean that intravenous drips are often used to maintain hydration and energy.

To ensure no more ticks are causing the paralysis, the pet may require clipping.

Treatment costs do vary on the size of the patient and severity of the paralysis. Please ask for an estimate at the start of treatment or if treatment is prolonged.

Home Care

If you find a tick on your pet at home and the animal has no symptoms, pull the tick out. A pair of tweezers or tick puller may help to get under the tick. Alternatively, spray the tick with insecticide.

If symptoms are present seek veterinary attention. **DO NOT TRY TO GET YOUR PET TO EAT OR DRINK** as the swallowing reflex will be reduced. Remember: Tick toxin absorbs slowly through the lymph, so **PARALYSIS CAN WORSEN FOR 36 HOURS AFTER REMOVAL OF THE TICK.**

When your pet comes home, remember that they are not completely well. Tick toxin affects their cardiovascular system (heart and blood vessels), increasing blood pressure and therefore the workload of the heart.

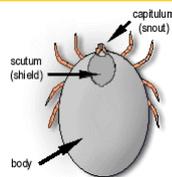
To help decrease this load, restrict exercise, keep stress to a minimum, and keep them cool. This reduces the chance of your pet suffering a heart attack. Some animals may take weeks or months to recover, and some suffer life-long effects of the toxin.

While animals can develop a degree of immunity after a tick engorgement, this can take a number of weeks and is not guaranteed. Apply a preventative treatment and check the animal daily as another tick can be deadly.

Preventing Tick Paralysis

Tick paralysis puts a great strain on your pet's body, and subsequent bouts of paralysis may be far worse than the first.

Treatment of tick paralysis can be very expensive, so prevention is a lot cheaper and can be achieved by a number of ways, and often a combination is the best choice.



Old wives tale: “Be sure to pull the head out with the tick or the head will burrow into the skin or will grow back in to another tick.”

Facts: The tick doesn't have a head. Some of the mouthparts always break off when the tick is removed. These fall off with the scab.

 **Daily checking** **Daily searches** over the body to find any ticks. Thoroughly scratch your fingers all over your pet, especially around the head, lips ears and the neck (under the collar) and between the toes,

 **Frontline** **Frontline Spot-on** (fortnightly) is our easiest and most popular product. Frontline Spray is also effective (monthly) and more cost effective for smaller pets. It's waterfast and can be combined with collars

 **Advantix** **Advantix Spot-on** (fortnightly) is for paralysis tick prevention. It is water resistant, and also kills fleas. Not suitable for cats.

 **Tick Collars** **Preventix** collars (2 months) are most cost effective, and are very popular. Secure the flapping collar tip. Disperses the powder through the coat but takes a few days to be effective. Has a strong peppermint/menthol smell.



Kiltix collars (6 weeks) also have a flea effect.

 **Rinses** **Fido's Flea and Tick Rinse** cleans coat, smells good, kills fleas, but only offers 4 days tick cover. We use this in our Dogwash



Permoxin (weekly) is also a good flea killer, with a concentrated rinse killing any ticks already on your dog, but only has a residual effect for 7 days.

