

Nicknames: Dog tick, Wood Tick

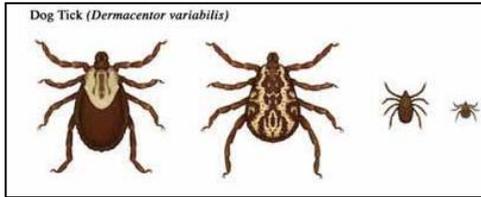


The **American dog tick**, *Dermacentor variabilis*, is a tick species widely distributed throughout the United States. It is associated with the transmission of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF) and some forms of tularemia. Dog ticks can be distinguished from deer ticks by their size (they are usually larger), by their physical appearance (they have different color schemes), and unlike deer ticks, only adult dog ticks bite humans and spread diseases.

Where in the United States is the American dog tick found?

American dog ticks can be found throughout eastern and central North America from Nova Scotia to the Gulf Coast and as far west as Texas and the Midwest. Dog ticks can also be found in some parts of the west coast, such as California, Oregon, eastern Washington and northern Idaho.

What does the American dog tick look like?



An adult dog tick has a brownish-red body with white markings on its back. The markings of a female tick are limited to a small area near the top of the back, whereas the design extends over the entire back of a male tick. Male and female dog ticks are both roughly 6.5mm long, but female ticks become noticeably larger when engorged after feeding and may reach 13mm x 10mm.

Which animals are usually bitten by the American dog tick?

Adult dog ticks prefer to feed on dogs, but other mammals including horses, sheep, opossums, raccoons, squirrels and people are also commonly bitten. Larvae and nymphs do not bite humans and typically feed on white-footed mice (*Peromyscus leucopus*), meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) and other rodents.

When is the American dog tick most active?

In the northeast, dog ticks become active in April and remain a nuisance through mid-August, with peak activity occurring in late June.

What is the ideal habitat of American dog ticks?

American dog ticks are abundant in the tall grass and weeds that border roads and trails. Ticks are also present where their hosts live, which include pastures, meadows, marshes, and the edges of lakes and streams. Although ticks of this type do not cause household infestations, they are often brought into a home by a person or a pet, and can survive inside for days without feeding.

What diseases can American dog ticks carry?

In the eastern United States, the American dog tick can transmit the organisms that cause Rocky Mountain spotted fever and tularemia, but these diseases are rare in Vermont. This tick species does not transmit Lyme disease or ehrlichiosis.

How do you prevent tick bites?

While outdoors:

- As much as possible, avoid high grass and bushy areas; stay on hiking trails.
- Wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts to minimize skin exposure to ticks.
- Tuck your pants into your socks to form a barrier against tick attachment.
- Wear light-colored clothing to help see ticks on your clothing.
- Check for ticks, looking particularly for what may look like nothing more than a new freckle or speck of dirt, and remove ticks promptly.
- Use an effective tick repellent on your skin or on your clothing. There are several repellents that are effective against ticks. For an up-to-date list of EPA registered products, see <http://cfpub.epa.gov/opprpref/insect/>. Repellents should not be used on infants under 2 months of age. Read the label carefully and use according to the recommendations.
- Permethrin is an insecticide that can be applied to clothing or gear. If you spend a lot of time in tick habitat, wearing permethrin-treated clothing can be very effective at reducing your exposure to ticks.

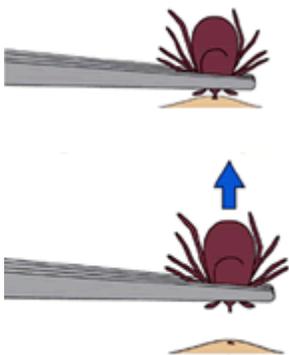
After you come inside:

- Check your or your child's body for ticks, and remove them promptly. Pay special attention to the head, armpits and groin area.
- Examine clothing and gear for ticks. Placing your clothes in a hot dryer for 60 minutes will kill any ticks that may be clinging to the fabric.
- Check your pets for ticks as well. Consult your veterinarian for advice on choosing effective tick repellents for your pets.

How do you remove ticks?

Try to remove the tick as soon as you discover it because prompt removal can prevent transmission of tick-borne diseases.

To safely remove ticks:



1. Use fine-tipped tweezers and grasp the tick close to the skin. Do not touch the tick with your bare hands
2. With a steady motion, pull straight up until all parts of the tick are removed. Do not twist or jerk the tick. Do not be alarmed if the tick's mouthparts remain in the skin. Once the mouthparts are removed from the rest of the tick, it can no longer transmit the disease-causing bacteria.

DO NOT use petroleum jelly, a hot match, nail polish, or other products to remove a tick. These methods are not effective.

Thoroughly wash your hands and the bite area.

After removing the tick, wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Clean the tick bite with soap and water or use an antiseptic such as iodine scrub or rubbing alcohol.