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Lyme Time

Most people have heard of Lyme disease, but probably don't know that it can affect dogs as well as humans. Lyme disease is caused by a bacteria called *Borrelia Burgdorferi* and is transmitted by infected ticks. It causes lameness and lethargy in dogs, and a skin rash and flu-like symptoms in us, and because our winters are becoming warmer it is allowing the tick season to extend, and the latest research suggests that approximately 15% of dogs at any one time have a tick and that 2.3% of the tick population are infected with the bug.

Ticks are generally found in damp areas of dense vegetation and long grass and jump on and bite as the dog/cat/human walks past.

When a tick jumps on, it bites into the skin. Then it inserts a tube through the skin down to the blood vessels below and releases enzymes and anti-clotting agents and starts feeding. It's during this feeding phase that the Lyme disease bacteria is transmitted.

When the ticks first attach they are very small, but as they fill with blood they look like a small greyish pea. We hear lots of methods to try and remove ticks – applying Vaseline to suffocate them; burn them with a cigarette; pull them out with tweezers – **DON'T!** It's very important to remove the mouthparts and the most sure-fire way that we've found of doing this is by using special tick hooks. You can get these over the counter from any of the surgeries, and some pharmacies will stock them too.

However, the best method of all to avoid Lyme disease is to try to prevent the tick from biting your dog at all. There are various spot-on preparations on the market that will kill ticks once they have bitten, but we prefer to use ones that will prevent ticks from biting at all. These preparations quite literally burn the feet of the tick as they jump on to your pet and the tick decides to jump off instead of bite your dog.

All the spot-on preparations we sell last for 4-5 weeks and during the peak of the tick season, or if you are going to the Highlands and Islands where ticks are even more prevalent it is very important that you apply these religiously every 4 weeks to ensure your pet is protected. It is also important that you don't bath your dog or let it submerge in water for 48hrs before or after application or its strength will be reduced.

This month we are getting ready for the ticks by giving you 10% off all 4 packs of spot-on for ticks.

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