

More Than You Ever Wanted to Know About Ticks

Did you know.....

....Ticks are more closely related to spiders than insects? (Ticks can be distinguished from insects because their bodies are not segmented and they also have 8 legs whereas insects have only 6.)

....Ticks don't really have heads.... (Ticks have mouthparts of varying lengths protruding from the tick body and are often incorrectly called the head.)

....Some tick life stages are able to survive for a few YEARS without finding a host and taking a blood meal?

....Most of a tick's life is spent in the off-host environment, seeking a host.

....Seed ticks are actually the larvae stage of a tick's life cycle. They are slightly smaller than the head of a pin.

....There are two main categories of ticks, soft and hard, although all ticks are covered with a very hard outer layer that protects them from environmental stresses.

....Female ticks can lay masses of eggs, ranging from several hundred to thousands.

....Oklahoma and North Carolina account for more than a third of the annual cases of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

Some Types of Ticks and Tick-Borne Diseases

The American dog tick is aptly named for its preference of small animals, domestic or wild, to act as hosts. This tick is the only known vector of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever in Oklahoma and is also known to cause tick paralysis in people and dogs. Less than one percent of ticks are infected with pathogens, (roughly 1 in 1,000 ticks), however RMSF is the most important tick-borne disease

in Oklahoma. RMSF is most active in the spring and early summer, and the majority of cases occur in the eastern half of the state in densely wooded areas.

The brown dog tick is probably the most widely distributed tick species in the world and is very common in Oklahoma. Dogs are its primary host, but where dogs and humans are in close association, bites to humans become more frequent.

The lone star tick is the one most commonly encountered by people in Oklahoma during recreational activities. This tick is active from early spring until late fall. This tick is known to transmit multiple diseases to animals and humans.

The black-legged tick (often called the deer tick) is another prevalent tick in Oklahoma and is active beginning in late September through March or April. This tick is known to transmit several pathogens to humans, including Lyme disease, however in Oklahoma, the black-legged tick is not known to transmit Lyme disease. Greater than 20,000 cases of Lyme disease are reported annually, but it is not reported to have a high prevalence in Oklahoma.

Much more information on tick identification, correct tick removal techniques, and methods of protection from ticks are available in [Fact Sheet EPP-7001](#).