Ticks in Northern Idaho

Information compiled from the Tick Encounter Resource Center

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Dermacentor variabilis (American Dog Tick)

Overview

American Dog ticks are found predominantly in areas with little or no tree cover, such as grassy fields and scrubland, as well as along walkways and trails. They feed on a variety of hosts, ranging in size from mice to deer, and nymphs and adults can transmit diseases such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Tularemia. American dog ticks can survive for up to 2 years at any given stage if no host is found. Females can be identified by their large off-white scutum against a dark brown body.

Adults

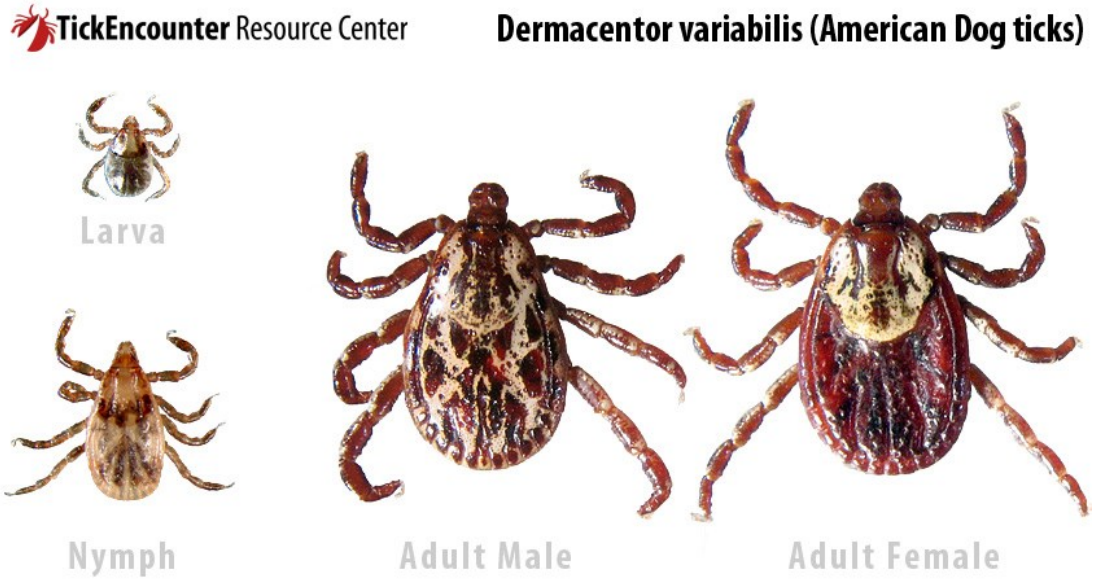
Adult males and females are active April- early August, and are mostly found questing in tall grass and low lying brush and twigs. They feed on medium-sized wildlife hosts, including raccoons, skunks, opossums and coyotes, as well as domestic dogs, cats and man. Adult American dog ticks commonly attack humans. Male ticks blood feed briefly but do not become distended with blood. Once finished feeding, males mate with the female while she feeds, which can take one week or more. Once replete, female dog ticks detach from their host and drop into the leaf litter, where they can lay over 4,000 eggs before dying.

Nymphs

Nymphs are active May - July, and feed on small and mid-sized animals, such as mice, voles, rabbits, raccoons and skunks. Nymphal dog ticks rarely attach to humans. Once engorged, nymphs detach from their host, falling into the grass/meadow thatch and leaf litter where they molt into adults.

Larvae

Larvae are active late April - September, and can be found questing for a host (voles, mice, raccoons, opossums, etc.) in the leaf litter. In the northeastern U.S., larvae overwinter and are most abundant in the spring and early summer. After blood feeding for 3 to 4 days, larvae detach from their host, falling into the grass/meadow thatch and leaf litter where they molt into nymphs.



Rhipicephalus sanguineus (Brown Dog tick)

Overview

Brown Dog ticks have a world-wide distribution, and can be found throughout the United States, although they are encountered more frequently in the southern tier of states. They occur predominately in and around human settlements and infest homes, animal pens, and dog kennels, often causing high levels of infestation both on dogs and in homes. These ticks can spend their entire life cycle indoors. Under optimal conditions, brown dog ticks complete their life cycle in as few as three months. All life stages of this tick can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever rickettsia (*Rickettsia rickettsia*) to dogs, and rarely to humans. Both nymphal and adult stages can transmit the agents of canine ehrlichiosis (*Ehrlichia canis*) and canine babesiosis (*Babesia canis vogeli* and *Babesia gibsoni-like*) to dogs. Controlling brown dog tick infestations can be difficult and usually requires a four step process: treating the pets, treating the house, treating the yard, and sanitizing the house by focusing on vacuuming. This process may take several treatments and take several months to eradicate the infestation.

Adults

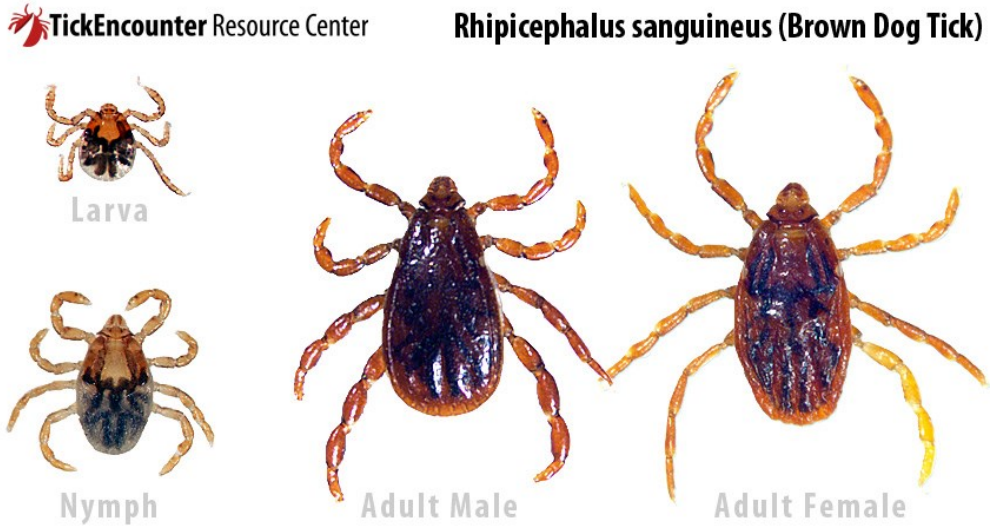
Adult males and females can be found at all times of the year and can survive for 18 months without feeding. They prefer to feed on dogs but will feed on other mammals, and occasionally humans. Males only feed for short periods of time before mating but females feed for about a week before becoming engorged. After digesting the blood meal, female brown dog ticks can lay up to 4,000 eggs. The eggs are often laid on top of kennels, on ledges, or in cracks and crevices in or around a house. Larvae hatch from eggs in 2 to 5 weeks.

Nymphs

Nymphs also can be found at all times of the year and survive for 6 to 9 months without a blood meal. Nymphs also prefer to feed on dogs but will feed on other mammals, and occasionally humans. Nymphs blood feed for five to ten days, and after detaching from the host, they take about two weeks to develop into adult stage ticks. After detaching from the host, engorged nymphs typically hide in and around furniture, windows, edges of rugs, house siding, and foundations.

Larvae

The six-legged larvae can be active at all times of the year, and can survive for 6 to 9 months without feeding. Like the adult and nymphal stages, larvae prefer to feed on dogs but will feed on other mammals and occasionally humans. Larvae blood feed for three to seven days before detaching from the host and take about two weeks to develop into nymphs. Engorged larvae typically hide in and around furniture, windows, edges of rugs, house siding, and foundations.



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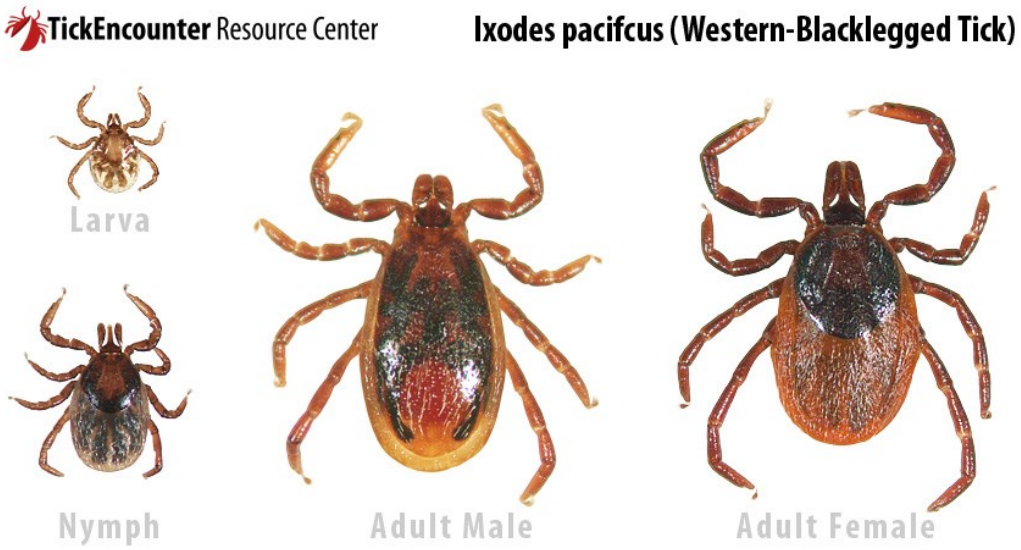
This tiny tick that causes big problems *Ixodes.*



There are hundreds of species of ticks found throughout the world, but a tick named "*Ixodes*" (X-oh-dees) is the one that carries the bacteria that cause Lyme disease in dogs and humans.

This tick is called "the deer tick" in the Eastern and Midwestern areas of the United States, and "the black-legged tick" in Western areas.

Ixodes Pacificus (Western Blacklegged Tick) <u>*IS* in Northern Idaho and *DOES* CARRY LYME DISEASE</u>

These ticks are very small (about the size of a sesame seed), and if you've ever checked for ticks on yourself or your dog, you know how difficult it is to find them. They have a sneaky way of hiding in areas of your dog's furry coat that makes them very hard to find during a tick check.

Ticks are a common vector for disease and second only to the mosquito for spreading illness to humans and animals. When dogs have a tick-borne disease, it's not uncommon for them to have multiple infections, such as Lyme disease and anaplasmosis. This is why comprehensive tick control programs are important.

Know How to Recognize the Western Blacklegged Tick

In its unfed state, the nymph is about the size of a poppy seed (1/25 inch long). It has four pairs of legs, a dark brownish-black plate on its back, and a light-colored, translucent abdomen. The unfed adult female is about 1/8 inch long, has long mouthparts, brownish-black legs, a dark brownish-black plate that covers the anterior half of its back, and a reddish-orange abdomen. Attached females feeding on a host may expand to 3/8 inch in length, or longer. At 1/10 inch, adult males are smaller than females, somewhat oval shaped, and brownish black.

The adults are commonly encountered in open grass or chaparral (brushlands), and along the margins of trails (especially the uphill vegetative borders of hillside trails) in parklands and wildlands, in semirural communities, and in some suburban areas that support surrounding domestic populations of deer and other wildlife, particularly in coastal counties and the foothills

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Dermacentor andersoni (Rocky Mountain Wood tick)

Overview

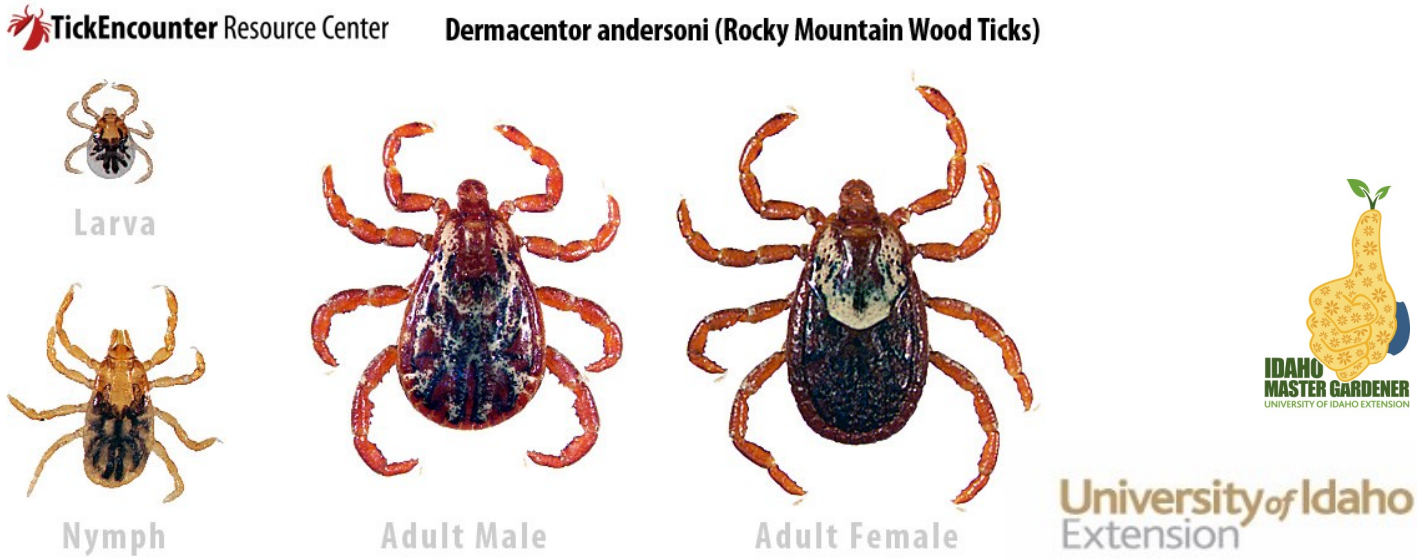
Rocky Mountain Wood ticks are found predominantly in shrublands, lightly wooded areas, open grasslands, and along trails, mainly at lower elevations. All life stages of this tick can transmit Colorado tick fever virus (CTFV) to humans, and Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) rickettsia (Rickettsia rickettsii) to humans, cats, and dogs. The saliva contains a neurotoxin that can occasionally cause tick paralysis in humans and pets; usually a bite from an adult female induces an ascending paralysis that dissipates within 24-72 hrs after tick removal. Both nymphs and adults of this tick can transmit the agent of tularemia (Francisella tularensis) to a variety of hosts, including humans, cats, and dogs. These ticks typically take two to three years to complete their life cycle.

Adults

In our area, adult male and female wood ticks can be active from January through November, but are most common in the late spring/early summer and their activity diminishes during the hot and dry mid-summer period. Large numbers of adult wood ticks can occur in April and May. Adults survive for up to 600 days without feeding. Adult ticks prefer to feed on medium to large mammals and can be found questing about knee-high on the tips of vegetation. Males only blood feed for short periods of time to initiate spermatogenesis, after which they seek to attach to and mate with female ticks. Female wood ticks feed for 4-17 days before dropping off their host and laying up to 6,000 eggs.

Nymphs

Nymphs are active from March through October and survive for up to 300 days without feeding. Nymphs prefer to feed on rodents, especially voles, and rarely attach to humans or pets. Once attached to a host, nymphal wood ticks take 3-11 days to feed to repletion. After consuming a full blood meal from their host, nymphs detach and can develop into the adult stage in as little as two weeks. Nymphs may enter a diapause, usually induced by diminishing day-length, and which can be broken when longer day-lengths signal more favorable environmental conditions.

Larvae

Larvae can hatch from eggs as soon as one to five weeks after egg laying. Larvae are active from March (further south) through October (further north) depending on the latitude, and can survive up to 117 days without feeding. Larvae prefer to blood feed on rodents and take two to eight days to feed to repletion. Once larvae have consumed a full blood meal they drop from their host and take one to three weeks to develop into nymphs. Larvae also may enter a diapause, induced either by diminishing day-length or unfavorable environmental conditions.