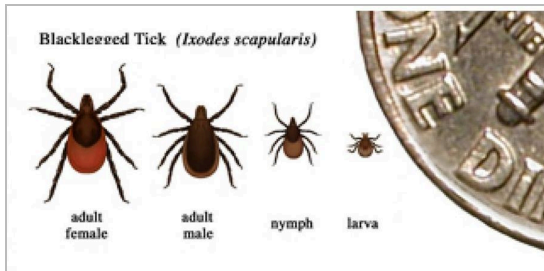


Ticks

(Blacklegged Tick – *Ixodes scapularis*; Lone Star Tick – *Amblyomma americanum*; American Dog Tick – *Dermacentor variabilis*)



Blacklegged (deer) tick stages, next to a dime



Lone star tick female



American dog tick female

Identification – Ticks are small, flat, oval relatives of spiders, with eight legs as nymphs and adults. We see three kinds in Northern Virginia. The **blacklegged (deer) tick** is dark, with a reddish-orange body on the female, and as a nymph it's as small as a poppy seed. The **lone star tick** is reddish-brown, with a white spot on the female's back. The **American dog tick** is larger and brown with cream-colored markings. Ticks don't jump or fly, and they don't drop out of trees.

Why they're a problem – Ticks can carry serious diseases. The blacklegged tick spreads Lyme disease, and the lone star tick has been linked to a red-meat allergy. Ticks need a blood meal at each stage of a life cycle that usually takes about two years, moving from small animals like mice and chipmunks to larger ones like dogs and deer. They can't reproduce without that blood meal, so they don't infest a house the way fleas can.

What we find – Ticks follow wildlife. They live where deer, rabbits, mice and other animals move through wooded or grassy edges, tree lines, fence lines and overgrown areas, and they rarely infest a well-kept lawn. In a townhouse with a small yard, the ticks on your dog probably came from the trails you walk, not from your property. A tick found indoors almost always hitchhiked in on a pet or someone's clothes. They drop off their hosts a few times a year, mainly in spring and fall, which is when people see the most.

What works – **Protect people and pets first, then reduce ticks where they live.** Tick treatments only work on ticks that are there, so we don't treat "just in case," and we don't treat indoors for ticks. For properties with wooded or grassy edges, Dynamic's tick reduction treatments target the transition areas (tree lines, fence lines and overgrown edges) in late spring and fall, timed for when the young ticks and the adults are out looking for a host. Because of the two-year life cycle, they reduce ticks over time; they won't eliminate them, and they won't protect a dog that walks the whole neighborhood.

What you can do – The most important step for pets is to talk to your vet about tick prevention for dogs and cats. For yourself, use an EPA-registered insect repellent on skin, and consider permethrin-treated clothing and gear, following the label. After time outdoors, check yourself, your kids and your pets, especially pant legs, waistbands, behind the knees and ears, and the hairline, and shower soon after coming in. Putting outdoor clothes in the dryer on high heat for about 10 minutes will kill any ticks. In the yard, keep the grass mowed, clear brush and leaf piles at the edges, and discourage wildlife.

When to call Dynamic – Give us a call if you're finding ticks in your own yard and it borders woods or fields, or if you're asked to treat a rental for fleas or ticks at move-out. In that case, ask us first, because a treatment often isn't needed. If you're not sure it's a tick, send us a photo and we'll identify it for you.