

# Results of Toronto Public Health “Tick Dragging” Tests 2025

## Background

Toronto Public Health (TPH) conducts tick dragging to monitor blacklegged ticks, which can carry Lyme disease, especially in parks. This helps identify risk areas for both humans and pets.

## 2025 Results Summary

In fall 2025, TPH tested 133 ticks, finding 41 positive for Lyme disease bacteria and several for other pathogens. Highland Creek and Rouge Park areas stood out with the highest concentrations, while other parks had fewer ticks.

## Detailed Survey Note

Toronto Public Health (TPH) conducts an annual tick dragging surveillance program to monitor blacklegged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) populations, the primary vector for Lyme disease in Toronto. This method involves dragging a cloth through vegetation in selected parks during the fall, when adult ticks are most active, to collect and test ticks for pathogens like *Borrelia burgdorferi* (Lyme disease) and others, such as *Babesia odocoilei*, *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*, *Borrelia miyamotoi*, or *Powassan virus*. The 2025 results, published and updated in spring 2026, provide critical data for assessing tick-related risks, particularly for dogs in Toronto parks.

## Overview of 2025 Tick Dragging Results

The 2025 fall tick dragging effort resulted in the collection and testing of 133 blacklegged ticks across various surveilled locations in Toronto. The laboratory results, conducted at the National Microbiology Laboratory, revealed the following:

- **Pathogen Testing:** The ticks were tested for six pathogens: *Borrelia burgdorferi*, *Borrelia miyamotoi*, *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*, *Babesia odocoilei*, *Babesia microti*, and *Powassan virus*.
- **Lyme Disease Bacteria:** 41 ticks tested positive for *Borrelia burgdorferi*, yielding an infection rate of approximately 30.83% (41/133), which is lower than the 43.86% seen in 2024 but still indicates notable Lyme disease risk in the sampled areas.
- **Other Pathogens:** Several ticks tested positive for additional pathogens, specifically:
  - 5 ticks positive for *Babesia odocoilei*.
  - 2 ticks positive for *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*.
  - 1 tick positive for *Borrelia miyamotoi*.

- 3 ticks positive for both *Borrelia burgdorferi* & *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*.
- 1 tick positive for both *Borrelia burgdorferi* & *Babesia odocoilei*.
- 1 tick positive for both *Borrelia burgdorferi* & *Borrelia miyamotoi*.

These results highlight not only Lyme disease risk but also the presence of other tick-borne diseases, which can affect dogs, such as anaplasmosis (*Anaplasma phagocytophilum*) and babesiosis (*Babesia* species).

### Location-Specific Findings

The surveillance covered multiple parks, with varying tick counts and infection rates. Below is a detailed breakdown, presented in a table for clarity:

LOCATION	TICKS FOUND	POSITIVE FOR LYME	OTHER PRESENT PATHOGENS
Centre Island - City Yard	5	0	None
Centre Island - Hanlan's Point	0	0	None
Centre Island - Snake Island/Algonquin Island	1	0	None
Centre Island - Ward Island	1	0	None
Charles Sauriol Conservation Area	2	0	None
Colonel Danforth Trail (North)	4	0	None
Colonel Danforth Trail (South)	2	0	None
David A. Balfour Park	0	0	None
Don Valley Brickworks	1	0	None
Earl Bales Park	0	0	None
Glen Stewart Park	3	0	1 for <i>Borrelia miyamotoi</i>
Grey Abbey Park	15	3	None
Guild Park and Gardens	2	1	None
Highland Creek	34	11	4 for <i>Babesia odocoilei</i>
			1 for <i>Anaplasma phagocytophilum</i>

			1 for Babesia odocoilei
High Park	0	0	None
Hinder Property	0	0	None
Humber River Rec Trail - Lambton Park	0	0	None
Humber River Rec Trail - Magwood Park	2	0	1 for Babesia odocoilei
Milkman's Lane	1	0	None
Panorama Park	0	0	None
Pine Point Park - Humber River	1	0	None
Rouge Park - Glen Eagle Vista Trail	31	17	2 for Anaplasma phagocytophilum
			1 for Anaplasma phagocytophilum
Rouge Park - Morningside Heights	27	9	1 for Borrelia miyamotoi
			1 for Anaplasma phagocytophilum
Rowntree Mills Park	1	0	None
Wilket Creek Park	0	0	None
West Deane Park - North & South	0	0	None

**Comparison to Previous Years**

To provide context, the 2024 results showed 57 ticks tested, with 25 positive for *Borrelia burgdorferi* (43.86% infection rate). The 2025 increase to 133 ticks and 41 Lyme positives reflects both expanded sampling and continued presence of ticks. TPH notes that surveillance locations vary annually.

**Methodological Context**

Tick dragging is a sampling method, not a comprehensive census, targeting areas with suitable habitats (wooded or brushy areas with tall grasses or leaf litter). The 133 ticks reflect collections from specific sites, not the total tick population. The results are used to update TPH's active tick surveillance map, published in spring (e.g., spring 2026 for 2025 data), and are not predictive but indicative of tick presence and risk. For accessibility, contact [publichealth@toronto.ca](mailto:publichealth@toronto.ca) for assistance with the map.

**Implications for Dogs**

For dog owners, these results are particularly relevant, given dogs' susceptibility to tick bites and tick-borne diseases like Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, and babesiosis.

High-risk areas like Highland Creek and Rouge Park suggest the need for:

- Tick Preventatives: Use vet-recommended products like Bravecto (oral, 12-week protection) or K9 Advantix II (topical, repels ticks), especially in eastern Toronto parks.
- Daily Checks: Inspect dogs daily, focusing on ears, neck, armpits, belly, and toes, after park visits to remove ticks before the 24-36 hour attachment period required for Lyme disease transmission.
- Trail Use: Keep dogs on designated trails to avoid brushy areas where ticks are prevalent.

The infection rate (30.83%) and presence of multiple pathogens underscore the importance of prevention, as dogs can also bring ticks into homes, posing risks to humans.

### **Limitations and Future Considerations**

The variation in tick numbers reflects sampling differences, not necessarily population changes. Expanding tick habitats and mild winters are increasing tick activity in Toronto, potentially raising future risks. TPH emphasizes that all of Toronto is an Estimated Risk Area, per Public Health Ontario's Ontario Blacklegged Tick Estimated Risk Areas, with higher concentrations in eastern parks.

### **Conclusion**

The 2025 TPH tick dragging results confirm the presence of blacklegged ticks in Toronto, with 133 tested, 41 positive for Lyme disease, and several for other pathogens. Highland Creek and Rouge Park areas are significant hotspots. For dog owners, these findings highlight the need for vigilance, especially in eastern parks, using preventatives and daily checks to mitigate tick-related risks.

### **Key Citations**

- Blacklegged Tick Surveillance Results City of Toronto
- Active Tick Surveillance Map City of Toronto
- Ontario Blacklegged Tick Established Risk Areas Public Health Ontario

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/lyme-disease/blacklegged-tick-surveillance-results/>