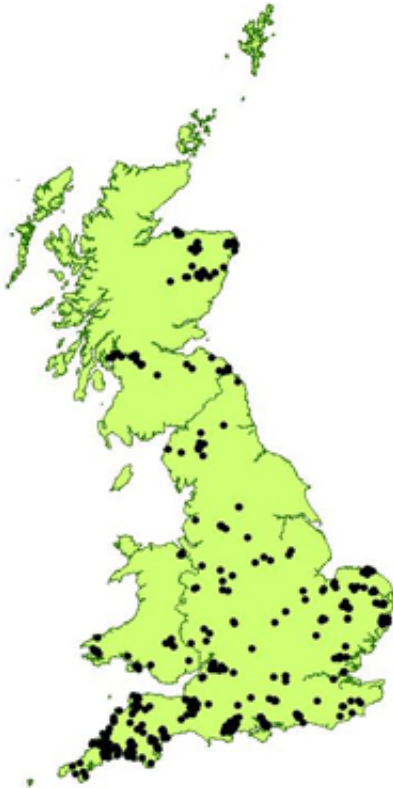


# Ticks are on the march in Britain

March 23 2011

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A map illustrating the prevalence of ticks attaching to dogs in Great Britain

The prevalence of ticks attaching to dogs in Great Britain has been mapped by scientists as part of a national tick survey. The findings reveal that the number of dogs infested with the blood-sucking parasites was much higher than expected. The study also confirms that a European tick species now exists in Great Britain.

The research, carried out by academics from the University of Bristol's Veterinary Parasitology Group and published in the journal *Medical and Veterinary Entomology*, found that at any one time 14.9 per cent of [dogs](#) were infested with ticks.

More than 3,500 dogs were examined for ticks at 173 vet practices across Great Britain between March and October 2009. The researchers found that gundog, terrier and pastoral breed groups were more susceptible to getting ticks than others, and that longer-haired dogs were more susceptible to ticks than short-haired dogs.

Samples of a tick species only found previously in continental Europe were also found in locations in west Wales and south east England, adding to growing evidence that this tick, deemed as 'exotic', is now a permanent resident in Great Britain.

Professor Richard Wall, head of the Veterinary Parasitology Group at the University, said: "This is an important study because the results suggest that the risk of tick infestation is far higher in dogs than was previously thought. This has serious implications for the incidence of tick-borne disease. The study also confirms that a non-native species of tick, which is also a major disease vector in Europe, is now established in southern England. It will be of considerable interest to monitor its spread."

Dogs can be infected with a number of tick-borne diseases, including Lyme disease. A non-native species of tick could help spread new diseases from Europe in the UK.

Current concerns over the potential impacts of changing climate and increased global movement of people and companion animals on the distribution of ectoparasites highlight the need for an accurate understanding of existing prevalence patterns, without which future

changes cannot be detected.

Faith Smith, lead author on the study from the University's School of Biological Sciences, added: "The study represents a major large-scale analysis of ticks in Britain – and the data could aid work to help predict the effects of climate change on tick distributions and disease spread."

The study entitled 'Prevalence, distribution and risk associated with [ticks](#) infesting dogs in [Great Britain](#)', was funded by the Natural Environment Research Council [NERC] and Merial Animal Health Ltd.

**More information:** [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10 ... 915.2011.00954.x/pdf](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/1461-2675.tb02111.x)

Provided by University of Bristol

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