

Vets warn of paralysis ticks

March 10 2015, by Rob Payne



Vets at the Murdoch Pet Emergency Centre (MPEC) are warning of potentially fatal toxicity in pets due to a sudden increase in paralysis tick cases.

Dr Jill Griffiths, Veterinary Supervisor of MPEC, said [pet owners](#) should take great care when travelling with their pets in the eastern states.

"Recent weather conditions have created perfect breeding conditions for these ticks. We have had more pets present with paralysis tick poisoning in the last 10 days than we usually see in a year," Dr Griffiths said.

"Paralysis ticks are not naturally found in Western Australia, and all the

cases we have seen here are of dogs and cats that have recently travelled from the eastern states. This coincides with record numbers of paralysis tick cases in New South Wales and Queensland."

Signs of paralysis tick intoxication include weakness, lack of coordination, gurgling, breathing problems, choking and a change in voice. The signs usually start with hind leg weakness and progress forward up the body.

Intoxication occurs when a [tick bites](#), releasing a toxin into the [pet](#) as they feed.

"Tick paralysis can be fatal, so it is critical that pets are taken to a vet immediately if any symptoms are noted. Treatment involves tick anti-serum, intravenous fluids and supportive care, and some animals will need extra oxygen or to be placed on a ventilator to help them recover from this toxicity," Dr Griffiths said.

Paralysis ticks are typically found along the eastern seaboard, usually in scrub and long grass. They usually attach around the legs, chest, head and neck, but can be anywhere on the body including down inside the ears.

Dr Griffiths said pets needed to be checked every day for ticks when in these areas, which owners could do by running their hands all over the animal's coat, feeling for anything unusual, including inside the toes and looking inside the ears.

Tick preventatives are also recommended, but do not remove the need for daily checks.

Dr Griffiths advises that if you do travel to the eastern states and find a tick on your pet, gently remove it immediately and closely monitor your pet for at least three days for any clinical signs.

"Paralysis can take up to three days to show signs, so it is important to be continually vigilant," she said.

Provided by Murdoch University

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