

Five ways to protect your pet from Lyme disease

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Credit: Depositphotos

Lyme disease is transmitted to people, dogs and cats when a deer tick infected with the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi* attaches itself to the skin for a blood feast.

Cats don't appear to get sick, but the Lyme bacterium can cause serious disease in some dogs—and ticks can fall off cats to feed on people or other household pets. There are a few simple steps you can take to lessen the chances that your pet will become infected, says Michael Stone, a clinical assistant professor at Cummings School.

1. Take care of your yard. Mowing the lawn regularly will make your backyard less attractive to ticks. Be sure to pull tall weeds and to remove leaf litter, particularly from under shrubs and around the perimeter, because that's where ticks hide. Secure your outdoor trash cans to discourage rodents that carry deer ticks.
2. Use a tick preventive on your pet. Make sure the one you choose is veterinarian-recommended and safe for all the animals in your household.
3. Check your animals for ticks daily. If your pets spend time outside, feel them for bumps, parting their fur so you can see where the coat meets the skin. Pay particular attention to under the legs, around the neck and inside the ears.
4. Talk to your veterinarian about a canine Lyme vaccine. Some research suggests that vaccination appears to work well in preventing infection in dogs not previously exposed to the Lyme bacterium. However, it's still important to use a tick preventive on your pet.
5. Protect yourself. Use repellent, wear treated clothing, shower after being outside and regularly check yourself for [ticks](#). They can hop from you to your pet.

Provided by Tufts University

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