

How to Check Your Dog for Ticks: A Step-by-Step Guide for Pet Parents

If your dog spends a lot of time outdoors, daily tick checks should become a part of your routine. In many regions across the United States, ticks are active year-round, even after a hard frost. These tiny parasites can transmit dangerous illnesses like Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, and anaplasmosis—not just to your pet, but to people as well.

The good news? A quick tick check could make all the difference.

Here's how to identify and safely remove ticks from your dog—and how to prevent them in the future.

Step 1: Scan for Ticks

Start by slowly running your fingers over your dog's entire body. You're feeling for any small bumps or swollen areas, especially ones that weren't there before. Ticks can attach anywhere, but they especially like to hide in:

- Between the toes
- Inside the ears
- Under the collar
- Around the face, chin, and neck
- In the armpits and groin area

Step 2: Is It a Tick?

Ticks may be black, brown, or tan, and they have eight legs. Some can be as small as the head of a pin, especially in the early stages before they've fed. As they fill with blood, they become larger and easier to spot.

Even if your dog is on a flea and tick preventative, no method is 100% foolproof, so it's important to check regularly.

Step 3: How to Safely Remove a Tick

What You'll Need:

- Gloves
- Clean tweezers or a tick remover
- Isopropyl alcohol
- Antiseptic or antibiotic cream

Always wear gloves to protect yourself from direct contact with the tick.

- Using Tweezers:

1. Grasp the tick as close to your dog's skin as possible, without pinching your dog.
2. Pull slowly and steadily in a straight motion. Don't twist or jerk—it could leave tick parts behind and cause infection.

- Using a Tick Remover:

1. Place the tool's notch against your pet's skin near the tick.
2. Slide the remover under the tick, allowing it to lift out cleanly as you pull.

Step 4: Aftercare and Monitoring

Place the tick in a sealed container with isopropyl alcohol and label it with the date and location it was found. This could help your veterinarian if your dog begins to show signs of a tick-borne illness in the coming days or weeks.

Symptoms may include:

- Lameness or arthritis lasting several days
- Fever or fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Swollen joints or lymph nodes
- Reluctance to move
- Neurological symptoms

After removing the tick:

- Wash your hands thoroughly
- Clean your dog's bite site with antiseptic
- Monitor the area for signs of infection
- Contact your veterinarian if symptoms arise

Step 5: Prevent Future Bites

Ticks are hitchhikers. They latch onto people and pets after time spent in wooded, grassy, or leafy areas. Here's how you can reduce the risk:

- Check your dog—and yourself—after all outdoor adventures
- Brush your dog regularly with a flea comb
- Vacuum your home frequently, and dispose of vacuum bags right away
- Mow the lawn, especially where your dog spends time
- Wash pet bedding weekly

- Use a pesticide-free pet shampoo
- Keep cats indoors to avoid tick and flea exposure

Most importantly, speak with your veterinarian about flea and tick preventatives. There are many options available—from topical treatments and collars to oral medications.

Final Thoughts

Tick prevention is a daily act of care. By making tick checks part of your routine, you're not only protecting your dog from discomfort, but also helping to prevent potentially serious illness.

Visit TheCanineCorner.org for more wellness tips and guides on keeping your pets safe, healthy, and happy year-round.

Step	What to Do
Step 1: Scan for Ticks	Run your hands over your dog's body, checking for bumps. Focus on ears, toes, collar area, armpits, and groin.
Step 2: Identify the Tick	Look for small, round parasites with 8 legs. Can be black, brown, or tan, and very small.
Step 3: Safe Removal (Tweezers)	Grasp tick close to skin with tweezers. Pull straight out slowly. Avoid twisting or jerking.
Step 3: Safe Removal (Tick Remover)	Slide tick remover under tick, near the skin. Gently pull until the tick releases.
Step 4: Aftercare & Monitoring	Place tick in alcohol. Clean the area with antiseptic. Watch for signs of infection or illness.
Step 5: Prevention	Check your dog daily. Use flea combs, vacuum often, mow the lawn, wash bedding, and talk to your vet about preventatives.