Do you have summer travel plans across the country this year? Maybe a backpacking trip through the Appalachian Mountains from Maine down to Georgia, exploring the grasslands of Texas or touring San Francisco’s Bay Area? No matter your adventures, beware of the potential unpleasant hitchhikers that might join you and your pets along the way—TICKS!!

Before we meet our usual suspects, here are some of the basics: Most ticks go through four life stages: egg, six-legged larva, eight-legged nymph and adult. After hatching from the eggs, ticks must consume blood at every stage of life in order to survive. Ticks can feed on mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Some ticks prefer the same host during all of its life stages, while others prefer to have a different host at each step. The full life cycle of a tick can take up to 3 or 4 years.

Ticks find their hosts by detecting animals’ breath and body odors or sensing body heat, moisture and vibrations. Some species can even recognize shadows. Ticks often choose well-used pathways, resting on the tips of grasses and shrubs. Although ticks cannot fly or jump, many tick species use ‘questing’ as means to attach to a host.

During the feeding process, ticks have the potential to transmit disease-causing pathogens through their saliva. For example, Lyme disease is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected Blacklegged Tick. It is important to note that NOT all ticks carry disease and NOT all tick bites result in infection. This only happens if the tick’s host has a bloodborne infection, then the tick ingests the pathogens in their blood and then transmits the acquired disease to a new host through biting. Dogs are very susceptible to tick bites and tickborne diseases. It is highly recommended that a tick preventative be used as prescribed by your veterinarian.

Tick bites on dogs can be hard to always detect and signs of tickborne diseases may not be present for 7-21 days after a tick bite. As always, watch your dog closely for changes in behavior or appetite. Further ways to reduce the chances that a tick bite will make your dog sick is to check your dog daily for ticks, especially on days spent mostly outdoors. If you find a tick on your dog, remove it right away or contact your veterinarian for assistance.

**TIPS ON REMOVING TICKS**

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the head of the tick as close to the skin’s surface as possible.
2. Pull upward with steady, even pressure, not twisting the tick.
3. Once the tick is removed, thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with soap and water.
4. Never crush a tick with your fingers. Dispose of a live tick by putting it in alcohol, placing it in a sealed bag/container, wrapping it tightly in tape or flushing it down the toilet.
The Usual Suspects and Their Locations

*Each tick species pictured displays 3 life stages: Larva, Nymph and Female/Male Adults*

NOT ACTUAL SIZE—ENLARGED FOR DRAMATIC EFFECT

**Brown Dog Tick**

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**American Dog Tick**

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**Rocky Mountain Wood Tick**

Western Blacklegged Tick

Blacklegged or Deer Tick

Lone Star Tick

Gulf Coast Tick
In Colorado, the most common tick species that bites humans and dogs is the Rocky Mountain Wood tick. This tick species is very active, doing most of its biting in the spring/early summer and becoming more dormant in the hotter end-of-summer temperatures. In general, this type of tick tends to thrive in higher elevations and studies show that Colorado Tick Fever is the most prevalent tick-transmitted disease for this area. In that same vein, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever is quite rare in Colorado, despite its name, and can be transmitted by the Rocky Mountain Wood tick, American Dog tick and Brown Dog tick.

At Countryside Animal Hospital, we offer Nexgard chewable tablets or Frontline Gold topical ointment for tick and flea preventatives for dogs. Our feline friends can be protected too with Frontline Gold for Cats. It is recommended pets receive a monthly dose throughout the peak tick season (March through October). Ask your veterinarian about the right tick preventative for your pet this summer!

For more information about ticks, contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-232-4636 or visit www.cdc.gov/ticks/

It's that time of year again to send in your adorable pet pictures for the Countryside Animal Hospital 2020 Calendar! Please email pictures to calendar@countrysidevet.com...THANK YOU!!