

How to Identify a Tick

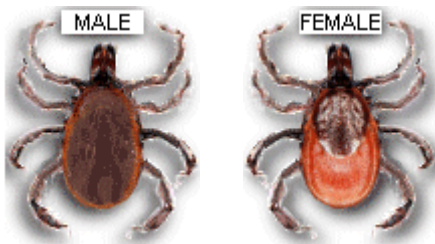
What are Ticks¹?

Ticks are blood sucking arachnids. A tick is small - the size of a pin head or sesame seed is an approximate comparison - and can be difficult to see. A tick can have 6 or 8 legs, and can be colored tan, red, brown or black. After sucking blood from an animal or human, it will grow to the size of a small pea and is then called "engorged" (filled with blood). Ticks like temperatures that are consistently above 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

What kinds of ticks are there?

There are 80 species of ticks found in the United States. There are three principal species found in the northeastern United States, and in Cape May County: Deer ticks, dog ticks, and lone star ticks.

Deer Ticks



The "**Black legged tick**", (*Ixodes scapularis*) a.k.a. the Deer Tick often attaches in both its nymphal and adult stages to humans.

Deer ticks can be found throughout North America. They prefer forest or dense brushy areas but they can also be prolific on lawns in residential areas and road side grasses.



***Ixodes scapularis* larva, nymph and adult female**

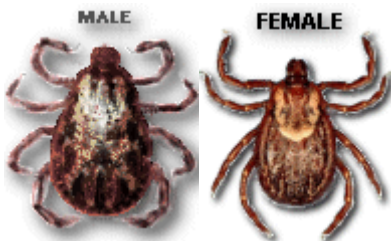
Larvae and nymphs feed primarily on small mammals, birds, deer, and outdoor domestic pets. Larval and nymph deer ticks aggressively bite humans. Adults feed primarily on deer, but also attach to other mammals such as raccoons, possums, dogs and humans. Larvae are active from July through September, nymphs from May through

¹ Some information and photos taken from <http://home.earthlink.net/~webmedic4u/ticks.html>; <http://www.basecamp.cnchost.com/tick-3.htm>; www.cdc.gov; Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 2004.

August, and adults in the fall, and spring. In warmer regions that are humid, they are a risk year round.

This species has been implicated in the transmission of diseases, including: Lyme Disease, Granulocytic Ehrlichiosis, and Babesiosis.

Dog Ticks



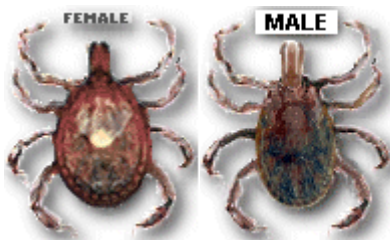
The "**American Dog Tick**", (*Dermacentor variabilis*), is the largest and most widespread tick in the Northeast, US, found throughout the United States, southern Canada and parts of Mexico.

Like other North American ticks, it prefers moist wooded areas, medium height grasses, and areas near wetlands and woods. Dog ticks can tolerate sunny open areas around woods. It has been reported that high light intensity and low relative humidity stimulates questing behavior for this species.

Larvae and nymphs feed primarily on small mammals such as rodents. Adults feed mainly on larger mammals such as dogs, but will aggressively bite humans. Dog tick nymphs are active from June to early September and larvae from late March through July. Adults are active from April to early September.

This species has been implicated in the transmission of diseases, including: Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Tularemia.

Lone Star Ticks



The "**Lone star tick**", (*Amblyomma americanum*), is another species that often attaches in both its nymphal and adult stages to humans.

Although abundant in southern and south west regions of the United States, it is not evenly distributed in the Northeast and Northwest. However, the Lone star tick has become more prevalent in the Northeast, possibly due to bird migration. The Lone Star tick is found in wooded areas in dense underbrush, scrub, meadow margins, hedge rows,

and areas between wetlands and woods. Larval, nymph and adult Lone Star ticks feed on a wide variety of wild mammals, outdoor domestic pets, birds and humans.



Amblyomma americanum larva, nymph, adult male and adult female partially engorged

Adults and nymphs are active from early spring through midsummer, while larvae are active mainly from late summer to early fall. Like most North American ticks, low humidity and high daytime temperatures restrict the activity of the Lone Star tick. This species has been implicated in the transmission of diseases, including: Human Monocytic Ehrlichiosis and Tularemia.

Comparison of three principal ticks by size and life stage

