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## HERE COME THE TICKS

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Although spring seems to be the worst time for ticks, we veterinarians see ticks here in the Rogue Valley all year round. Surges in the prevalence of ticks seem to coincide with a long dry spell followed by rain. This year we really have yet to see a long dry spell to precede the rain, but when we do you can count on ticks.

Ticks are excellent transmitters of disease. The Brown Dog Tick and the American Dog Tick are the most common. Diseases transmitted by ticks include Ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and Lyme disease. Although any tick can transmit disease, most tick bites are disease free. Finding and removing ticks as soon as possible reduces the likelihood of disease transmission. The longer the tick is attached, the greater the possibility for disease to be transmitted. Avoiding areas likely to have ticks and using tick preventative medications are the best methods for preventing disease.

Ticks find their prey by sensing body heat. They attach to the passing warm object by clinging to clothing or fur, or falling from a tree. The tick then migrates to a chosen feeding location and inserts its pincher-like mouth parts into the skin and begins to feed. The larva, nymph and adult all need blood to complete their life stage and molt to the next level.

To avoid ticks, stay away from areas with tall grass, thick brush or overhanging trees. If you find a tick on your pet, remove it as soon as possible. The best method for removing a tick is to grasp the tick at skin level, below the body, with a pair of tweezers, a hemostat or other tick removal device. Avoid touching the tick with your bare fingers or squeezing the body of the tick. Gently pull back on the tick until it comes free. If the head of the tick remains attached, remove as much of it as possible. Any remaining bits of the tick will be treated by the dog's body similar to a sliver. Usually no further treatment is necessary, but keep an eye on the area to make sure it does not become infected.

Ticks are tough bugs to kill. There are many tick control products on the market for pets, and most contain permethrin, fipronil, or Amitraz. Some control other parasites as well. Consult your veterinarian to determine which product is right for you. Some products are stronger than others and some have the potential to be more toxic. Never use a product for dogs on your cat because of this. When in doubt, ask your veterinarian. Because there are so many new products available to control ticks, it can be safer and easier than ever.