

TICK PARALYSIS PREVENTION IN DOGS AND CATS

What are ticks ?

Ticks are small arthropod parasites common on the Australian east coast, particularly common in areas of thick bush with native wildlife. Tick toxicity occurs when the paralysis tick (*Ixodes Holocyclus*) attaches to your dog or cat to feed. Approximately 5% of pets affected by tick toxicity die – it is vital to know what signs to look out for and to use proven preventatives. Even a single tick can kill your pet! Be alert in all seasons – ticks are active on Sydney's North Shore year round.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF TICK PARALYSIS ?

Pets may show some or all of the following symptoms:

- A weak wobbly appearance, or sitting down more than usual
- Vomiting and retching (mainly dogs)
- A change in the meow or bark (due to laryngeal paralysis)
- Cough or wheeze
- Difficulty breathing

Without treatment paralysis progresses to complete collapse, and death from respiratory paralysis or heart failure.

TICK PARALYSIS IS AN EMERGENCY !

Consult veterinary attention immediately if your pet shows signs of tick paralysis. Do not “wait and see how it goes”. Tick anti toxin is 90% more effective if given immediately compared to 24 hours later. Untreated tick paralysis is commonly fatal.

PREVENTING TICK PARALYSIS

Recently, new **isoxazaline** tick preventatives have greatly improved tick control, including:

- **Bravecto (3-monthly oral chew tablet for dogs) – our preferred product**
- Simparica (monthly oral chew tablet for dogs)
- Nexgard (monthly oral chew tablet for dogs)

Bravecto is also available as a spot-on liquid for cats (lasts 3 months) and dogs (lasts 6 months). This is excellent news for cat owners who prior to this, needed to apply a full body spray every 3 weeks!

In high risk situations - if your pet spends a large amount of time in bushy areas or exploring local fire trails, we recommend using a tick collar such as Seresto (which repels tick for 4 months) in conjunction with one of the above preventatives. Please discuss this with our friendly staff.

Products that claim to prevent ticks through magnets or ultrasonic means are false and misleading and will not protect your pet!

Clipping

Clipping pets with long hair can be life-saving in tick season. It is often impossible to find an attached tick on your pet if there is a long or thick coat present. Many pet owners routinely clip their pet's coat short in the spring and summer to enable thorough tick searches to be performed. It is particularly important to keep the hair around the face and muzzle short because this is where the majority of ticks attach. If your pet presents with tick paralysis, even if a tick is located, we will recommend their hair be clipped short to ensure no other ticks are attached.

Searching

Daily searching for ticks on your pet should be part of their health care routine all year round. Never rely fully on tick preventative products, as there is the occasional case where tick paralysis occurs while a pet is on a preventative (thankfully much less frequently with the newer more effective products). It is much easier to search thoroughly for a tick if your pet has been clipped short – start with the head, face, neck and shoulders because 70% of ticks attach in those locations.

Removal of Ticks

Remove the tick with Tick Twisters (available from Turrumurra Vet). People with longer finger nails can pull the tick out at the base. Do not try to kill the tick first with kerosene, methylated spirits or tea tree oil - this actually makes the tick inject more toxin into your pet! If there is any doubt about whether your pet may have some early signs of toxicity, bring them to Turrumurra Vet Hospital for an immediate assessment.