

TICKS OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

What are ticks?

- Ticks are blood-feeding parasites that feed on birds, mammals and reptiles.
- Ticks have eight legs in adult stages and six legs in nymph and larval stages.



WINTER TICK
DANIEL FITZGERALD, ALBERTA FISH AND WILDLIFE

Are there ticks in the Northwest Territories?

- Ticks are rarely encountered in the Northwest Territories (NWT) on pets, humans and wildlife.
- The winter tick (*Dermacentor albipictus*) can cause skin disease in certain wildlife species, like moose and caribou. The GNWT Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (ENR) Wildlife Division has been tracking this condition.
- Occasionally, tick species can be introduced by movement of animals into the territory from other regions (e.g. migratory birds and dogs).
- Larval and nymph life cycle stages of ticks will crawl up the stems of grasses to “quest”—that is, wave their legs in the air in an attempt to attach to passersby.

How can ticks affect humans?

- Some tick species can carry pathogens and agents that can cause disease in humans and animals.
- Tick bites are often not felt because ticks have special compounds in their saliva.
- Some people can have allergic reactions to tick bites with redness and swelling associated with the bite. Seek medical attention if you experience these symptoms.
- The risk of becoming infected with the bacterium that causes Lyme disease (*Borrelia burgdorferi*) in the NWT is very low, based on the species of ticks that live in the territory.

How do I practice tick safety?

- Proper tick removal includes using tweezers and gently dislodging the tick from the skin as close as possible to the site of attachment.
- Ticks can be more common in other regions of Canada. Use typical tick safety while enjoying the outdoors and discuss preventative measures for your pets with your local veterinarian.
- General recommendations for tick safety while enjoying the outdoors include checking yourself and your pet for ticks after being outside, using insect repellent, wearing long-sleeves and pants, and tucking your pants into your socks.
- If you find a tick on yourself, friend or family member, utilize appropriate methods to remove it and contact the Department of Health and Social Services (867-767-9066).
- If you find a tick on your pet, contact your local veterinarian or the ENR Wildlife Health Program or WildlifeVeterinarian@gov.nt.ca.
- If you find a tick on a wild animal, contact your local ENR Office.

Where can I find more information on ticks?

- <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/lyme-disease/removing-submitting-ticks-testing.html>
- https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/removing_a_tick.html

