

Dog Tick

Common Name: Rhipicephalus ticks

Common Family Name: Hard ticks

Other Names: Brown dog tick, kennel tick

Origin: Apparently this tick is native to North America, and it occurs most often in states with warm climates. It also occurs into Latin America in the tropical and subtropical areas.



Biology: The brown dog tick is a common pest of dogs, but possibly does not attack humans at all. However, it can be a serious nuisance in the home when pets are infested. It is potentially a vector of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. Hard ticks in general have a two year life cycle, with eggs hatching to the 6-legged larva in the spring, these progressing to the second instars nymph stage which overwinters, and these progressing the following year to the adult tick. There is usually a single blood meal at each stage, with the tick remaining attached for several days to over a week. After fertilization by the male, and a blood meal, the female hard tick produces a single batch of up to several thousand eggs, and then she dies. These eggs are usually placed into a secluded crevice of some sort, and this may be within a structure. The engorged, gravid female becomes bloated to many times her original size.

Identification: The brown dog tick is very similar to a number of other species of hard ticks in the genus Dermacentor. Adults are about 3 mm long, flattened top to bottom, and are much wider at the posterior end than the front. There are tiny pits scattered over the top of the body, and the color is a somewhat uniform reddish brown. With high magnification several other key characters distinguish this tick. By the anal opening on the underside of the abdomen there is a small “anal groove” just behind the anus which is absent in Dermacentor ticks. In addition, the body plate directly behind the mouthparts, the “basis capituli”, has pointed expansions on each side on Rhipicephalus.

Characteristics Important in Control: Tick control begins with prevention, by helping people understand what ticks look like, how to inspect for them, and how to remove them when found on clothing or the body. The use of repellents, light colored clothing, and frequent inspection when in tick infested habitats are important. Pets should be carefully inspected as well after activity in potential tick habitat. For tick infestations within a structure careful applications of a residual pyrethroid to cracks and crevices that may harbor the ticks or their egg masses may be needed, and outdoors applications to turf and foliage around the perimeter of a property will kill ticks that are close to this urban environment.