



BROWN DOG TICK

Keep an eye out for ticks on dogs

In the past two years, brown dog ticks have been detected in isolated cases in Christchurch, Wellington and Dunedin.

Brown dog ticks (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*) are widespread around the world but to date have not become established in New Zealand. They may arrive with passengers, luggage, personal effects and imported animals (mainly dogs) from overseas, despite strict border biosecurity measures. The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has found and eradicated the tick on the rare occasions it has been found here previously.

Ticks are small spider-like bugs that feed on the blood of many animals, including humans. Dogs are the preferred host of brown dog tick.

Because of the way they feed, by piercing the skin and sucking blood, ticks can spread diseases from one animal to another. It is important to note that brown dog ticks rarely attack humans. In addition the diseases they are known to spread are not present in New Zealand. They therefore pose a very low level of health risk to humans. They can, however, spread some dog diseases and heavy infestations of ticks can be uncomfortable for dogs.

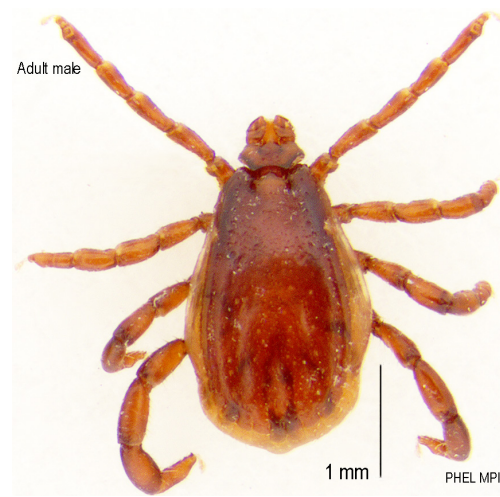
MPI wants to find any tick populations that may be present in New Zealand and get rid of them.

WHAT DO BROWN DOG TICKS LOOK LIKE?

These ticks are red-brown in colour. They have a four-stage life cycle where they develop from an egg into larva, nymph and then adult. Each phase (apart from the eggs) attaches to the host animal (mainly dogs) and feeds on its blood.

The ticks vary in size depending on the stage in their life cycle. Unfed larvae and nymphs are hard to see, being less than one millimetre in length and often concealed in the dog's fur.

Adult females that are fully fed (engorged with blood) can be as large as one centimetre in length, and it is at this stage that they are most visible.



Fully-fed female (left) and male (right) adult.

Larvae and nymphs feed on any part of the dog, but adults are most commonly found on the ears, the back of the neck and between toes. They will be on the dog's skin and you will most likely need to part the fur to find them. They differ from fleas in that they do not jump.

A dog with large numbers of ticks may develop a skin rash and scratch.

WHAT DO I DO IF I FIND TICKS?

Firstly – there is no need to panic. Brown dog ticks are permanently removed through treatment with common over-the-counter products that are sold for flea treatment. Dogs fully recover.

If you believe you have found brown dog ticks on a dog, phone MPI on 0800 80 99 66. They will give you advice on what to do next. It is likely someone will visit to check the dog/s and inspect any associated properties for signs of ticks. These ticks can be found in furnishings and dog bedding, for example.

Report suspected sightings to MPI on **0800 80 99 66** or contact your veterinarian.