



Tick Facts 2024  
Draft 3

Ticks are Arachnids, (having 8 legs), not insects, (which have 6 legs).1

Ticks feed on the blood of mammals, birds, or reptiles. Blood is their only food source.2

Black-legged (deer) ticks and dog ticks are found throughout Massachusetts and may spread different disease-causing germs when they bite. 4

Ticks find their hosts by detecting an animals' breath, body odors, body heat, moisture, or vibrations.2

Ticks are not capable of flying or jumping.1

Many tick species lie in wait, clinging to leaves and grasses. They hold their first pair of legs outstretched, waiting to grasp and climb onto a passing host.1

Ticks attach to and feed off of white footed mice and chipmunks as well as other rodents.2

Rodents carry the pathogens which cause Lyme Disease. When there are predators in a given area, such as foxes and hawks, they help keep the population of small rodents down. The tick population is then reduced and there are fewer cases of tick-borne illness in the area.4

Tick activity and tick-borne diseases like Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, Borrelia miyamotoi, and Powassan virus, occur year-round in Massachusetts.4

Each female deer tick produces approximately 1500 larvae.4

Deer ticks are benefiting from warm winters in the northeast and are becoming more active at times when they are usually dormant. They can be active at temperatures near 32 degrees Fahrenheit.5

Although tick activity is weather-dependent, there are two peaks during the year; the first begins in March/April and lasts through August, and the second occurs in October-November.4

Deer tick larvae hatch from eggs in late June.

The majority of cases of tick-borne disease occur in June through August.5

The most common tick-borne diseases in Massachusetts are Lyme Disease, Babesiosis, and Anaplasmosis. 7

Tick-borne illnesses can be very severe and taking steps to avoid tick bites is important.7

Although not every tick carries a disease, it is important to take steps to avoid all tick bites.7

DEET and citronella are used to repel ticks and mosquitoes.7

Remove ticks with forceps, suffocate ticks with dish detergent. Make sure the mouth parts are removed.,2,7

- To prevent tick bites,3,
  - use insect repellents that contain an EPA-registered active ingredient like permethrin or DEET, apply to clothing, not to skin
  - tuck your pants legs into your socks.
  - wear light-colored clothing to more easily spot ticks
  - do daily tick checks
  - promptly and properly remove any attached ticks
  - strong-smelling plants such as mint, lavender, thyme, rosemary, garlic and rose geranium, citronella, may help repel ticks in your yard

