

## **TICKS**

*This paper has been presented by Dr. David Banks, Raby Bay Vet Surgery, Cleveland*

### *What are ticks and where are they? How do I know if they're nasty?*

The paralysis tick (known as *Ixodes holocyclus*) is common in the Redlands. Other (non-toxic) types of tick are occasionally found, but it is always safest to assume that any tick found on your pet is a paralysis tick. The “natural” host of the paralysis tick is the bandicoot, but other wildlife and domestic species are acceptable hosts. Native vegetation is the preferred habitat, so there not too many areas locally where your dog or cat is NOT at risk at peak times.

### *When is my pet at risk?*

The paralysis tick is a great survivor and has been known to cause toxicity at any time during the year. Warmer, moister months are the optimum times for tick breeding, but there is a lot of variation – ask your Vet or Vet Nurse.

### *What can happen if a tick attaches and feeds on my pet?*

As the tick feeds on the unlucky pet it injects saliva containing a potent toxin which effects nerve-muscle function. Over a period of 2-4 days, a variably severe muscle paralysis occurs. Heart muscle is also affected with serious consequences. Please understand that tick toxicity is life-threatening. Delay or failure to seek treatment can result in death.

### *What signs do we watch for?*

*Subtle changes in “voice” (bark or meow).*

*Any change at all in breathing – wheezing, rapid breathing, “grunting”.*

*Gagging or vomiting.*

*Wobbly hindquarters initially, progressing forward to complete paralysis of all four legs.*

**ONCE ANY SIGNS OF TICK PARALYSIS ARE SEEN, IMMEDIATE VETERINARY ATTENTION IS VITAL.**

### *What can be done about tick paralysis?*

With prompt and careful attention, approximately 95% of tick paralysis cases in dogs and cats survive. The sooner treatment is started, with specific tick antitoxin; the more likely is a favourable result. Other drugs and specific nursing protocols are involved, depending on the severity of the case.

***That sounds expensive and still sounds like this is a risky situation! What about prevention?***

Tick paralysis treatment can indeed be expensive, and some cases do not survive despite our best efforts. Prevention certainly is a better option. Also strongly consider appropriate Pet Health Insurance just in case the worst happens.

In tick-risky situations, thorough daily searching of your pet's coat is a very important matter, early discovery and removal of a tick may make all the difference. Run your fingers systematically through the coat, paying particular attention to head, neck and shoulders. Clipping long-haired breeds at peak tick times may make searching easier.

***Chemical tick prevention should be instituted year-round.*** We would be happy to discuss your needs and select the most appropriate product for your pet, in conjunction with other parasite preventatives.

***I don't know what to look for or what to do if I found a tick.***

Ticks are arachnids, like spiders: they have a roughly oval-shaped, one-part body, with eight legs on their adult form and mouthparts at the front end for attaching to and feeding from their host.

See PDF – Pictures of ticks

If you find a tick remove it straight away; use fingernails, eyebrow tweezers or the like, and pluck it straight out after grasping at the front end. Don't worry about leaving the "head" behind – there isn't really a head – the important thing is to remove the tick. Also, don't use kerosene or other toxic chemicals on the tick first.

Put the removed tick in a small container for identification, load your dog and tick in the car and go to your vet.

Chemical-based tick prevention is essential. No one product has proved to be 100% effective yet, but all recommended products markedly reduce the amount of toxin injected by ticks that manage to survive, greatly reducing the chances of fatality.

## *TICK PREVENTION PRODUCTS*



### *PRODUCTS FOR DOGS:*

#### *PROBAN:*

This is in tablet form and must be given orally every second day. This is a very effective method and is not affected if the dog goes swimming or bathing.

#### *FRONTLINE-PLUS:*

This is a topical “Stripe-on” product that must be applied fortnightly to the back of the neck. It may be affected by water.

#### *ADVANTIX:*

This is a topical “Stripe-on” product that must be applied fortnightly to the back of the neck. It may be affected by water. It is supposed to be the best on the market for combating ticks.

#### *TICK COLLARS*

Preventic or Kiltix, collars. These tick collars are very reliable and cost effective. They must be replaced every six or eight weeks according to the instructions on the back of the packets.



### *PRODUCTS FOR CATS*

(Off label uses, based on clinical experience – no products are registered for cats.)

#### *FRONTLINE*

This is a topical “Stripe-on” product that must be applied fortnightly to the back of the neck. It may be affected by water.

#### *PROBAN*

This is in tablet form and must be given orally every second day. This is a very effective method and is not affected if the dog goes swimming or bathing.