

{ LIFE CYCLE: *Ticks*

Ticks are second only to mosquitoes in the number of diseases they transmit, which is why it's so critical to prevent ticks from attaching to—and feeding on—pets and people in the first place. Understanding the tick life cycle and the behavior of these pesky parasites can help keep them in check.

Here's a breakdown of the tick life cycle from egg to adult:

1. Egg. An engorged female tick can lay up to several thousand eggs in sheltered environments (not on a host).

2. Larva. The six-legged larval stage hatches from the egg within weeks to months, depending on environmental conditions. Larvae remain on the ground or on low vegetation waiting for a host, which is usually a bird or small mammal.

3. Nymph. After feeding on a host for several days, the engorged larva drops to the ground and molts to an eight-legged nymph. The nymph then finds an appropriate host and feeds for several days to a week.

4. Adult. Once the nymph has engorged, it drops to the ground and molts to the eight-legged adult, which then must find a third host—you or your pet, maybe?

> Ticks can survive in less-than-ideal environmental conditions, which is why it's so important to use year-round parasite protection.

