



TICK CHECK



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Spring is in the air! With the weather warming up, people are spending more time playing, exploring, and hiking around in the great outdoors. Unfortunately, this also means more quality time with some of nature's most nefarious pests.

In the United States, there are 90 different species of ticks. The most common types seen in Montana are the **American Dog Tick** and the **Rocky Mountain Wood Tick**, both of which can carry Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Before heading outdoors, check out the following facts to better prepare for these biting buggers.

Ticks are not insects.

Ticks are often mistaken for insects, but they are actually classified as arachnids. This makes them relatives of spiders, scorpions, and mites. To identify a tick, look closely to see that it resembles a spider with four pairs of legs and no antennae.

Ticks are daredevils.

Ticks cannot jump or fly. They crawl up brush or grass and clasp on with their back legs while stretching out their front legs to grab onto a passing animal or human. They will even let go of their perch all together and free fall onto a passing host.

Ticks are REALLY slow eaters.

Unlike many other biting pests, ticks have to feed for long periods of time. They bury their teeth into the skin of the host to ensure a good grip for several days. Ticks typically require 24 - 48 hours of feeding before they can successfully transmit infections, so prompt removal is crucial.

Although small in size, ticks cause BIG problems.

Ticks are stubborn.

When removing a tick, it is important to do so **quickly and completely** using tweezers and gloves. There are many old wives tales about how to best remove a tick, but many of these either don't work or can make things worse.

Ticks can become irritated which causes them to latch on tighter or vomit into the bite site, thereby giving the host whatever potential viruses or diseases they may be carrying.

Ticks are animal lovers.

Ticks also love our furry friends. Some tick species, like the American dog tick and brown dog tick, prefer dogs as hosts. Unfortunately, our good boys and girls are easy prey while playing in the yard, tall grasses, or wooded areas. If you're a pet owner, check your pup frequently, especially after walks or playtime. Be sure to check your outdoor cats too!



To avoid one of these little pests from hitching a ride you can:

- use repellent on yourself and pets
- pretreat your shoes and clothes
- dress appropriately (tuck pants into socks, wear hats to cover hair)
- put your clothes in the dryer on high for 20 minutes after a hike
- take a shower