

All about creatures that bite

Fun Bites

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The magazine for those not afraid of
mosquitoes, bed bugs, lice, and fleas

WINTER 2014



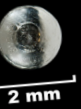


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THE BIOLOGY OF TICKS

In Louisiana, most people very rarely come in contact with ticks. In the Southern U.S., we have about 20 different species of ticks. Most of these will spend their lives feeding on rodents, lizards, deer, or livestock.

MOST TICKS GO THROUGH 4 LIFE STAGES: EGG, SIX LEGGED LARVA, EIGHT LEGGED NYMPH, AND AN EIGHT LEGGED ADULT. AFTER HATCHING FROM EGGS, THE TICKS WILL FEED ON BLOOD AT ALL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT. THE LIFECYCLE MAY TAKE UP TO 3 YEARS TO COMPLETE.

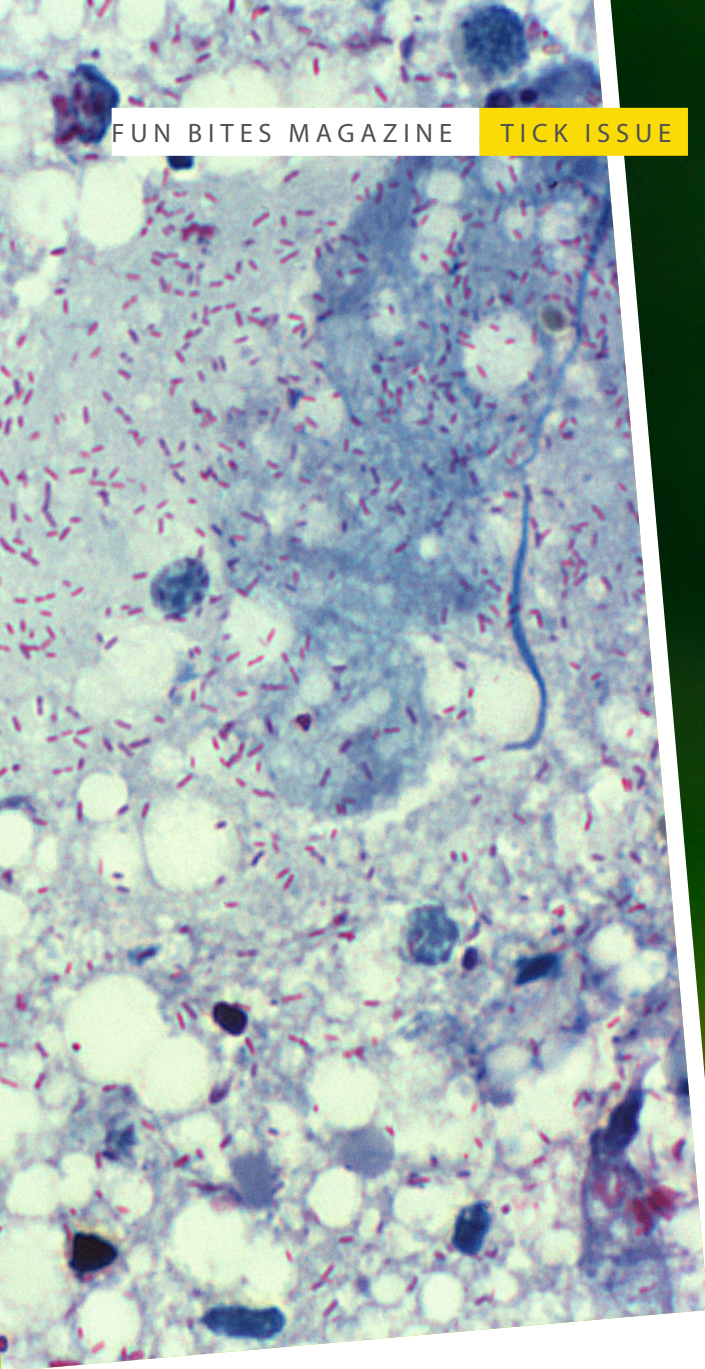


Ticks find their host animals by their body odors, breath, body heat, and vibrations. Many species of ticks hold on to grass or leaves and wait for a host to pass by (questing). As the host brushes up against the grass, the tick will quickly climb onto the host. Most questing ticks will wait on vegetation along edges (such as the edge of a hiking trail, or the edge of a field). Ticks do not jump or fly, and can only find hosts by questing or crawling. In Louisiana, most people come in contact with the adult ticks, which are much bigger than the larvae and nymphs. It is for that reason that most people will find ticks and remove them right away. Although ticks are encountered less often in Louisiana, it is important to check yourselves and your pets after hiking, biking, or hunting.

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TICKS AND DISEASE

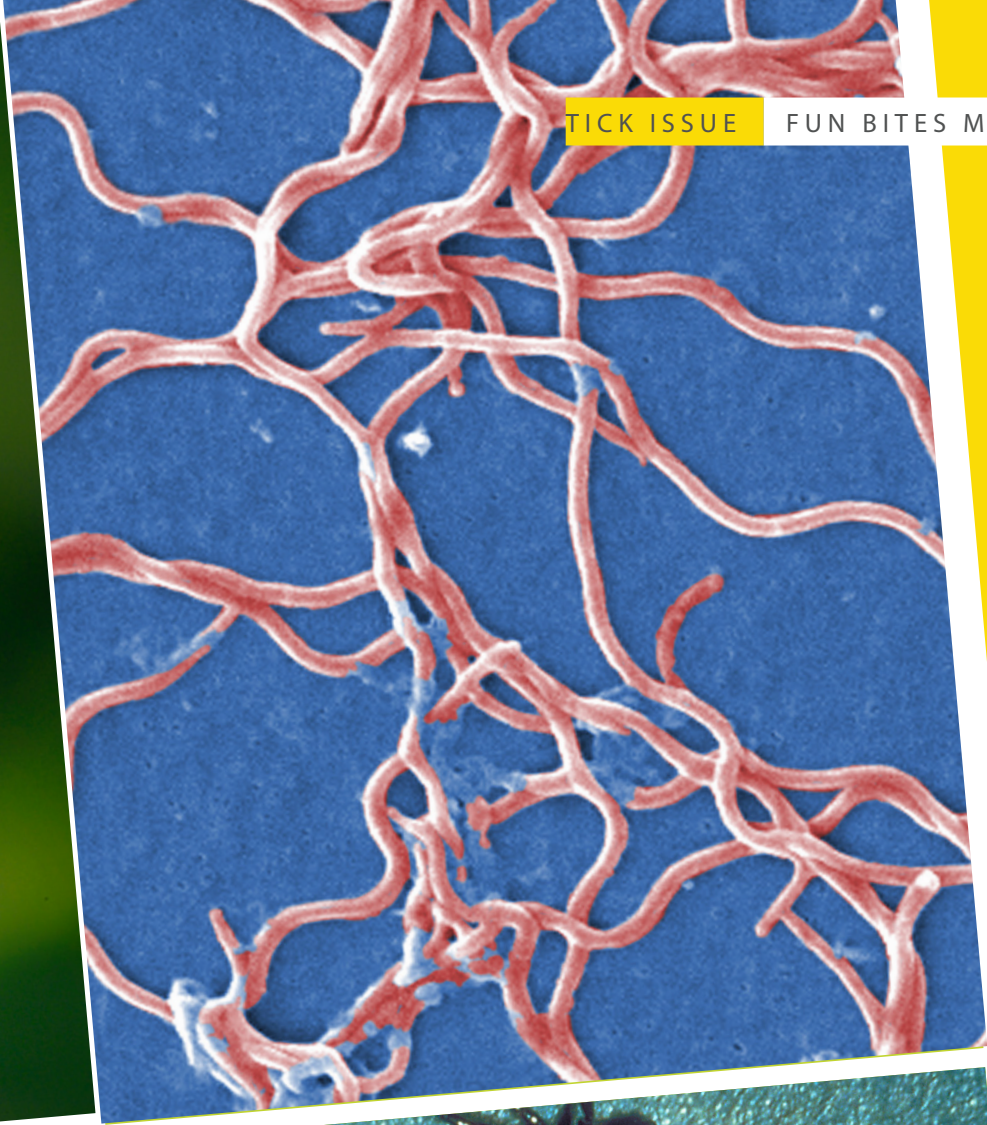


TICKS AND DISEASE

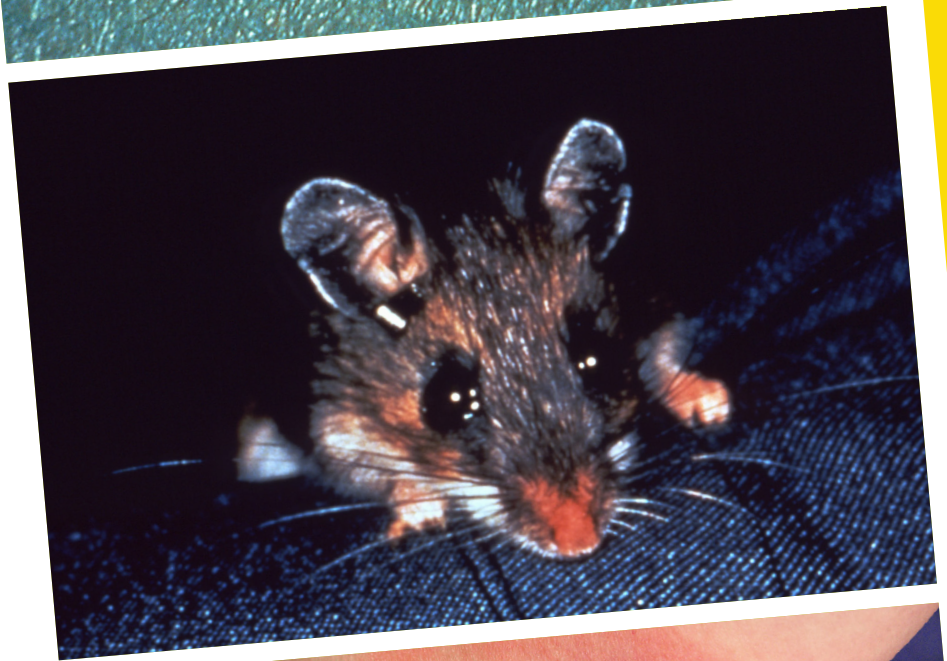
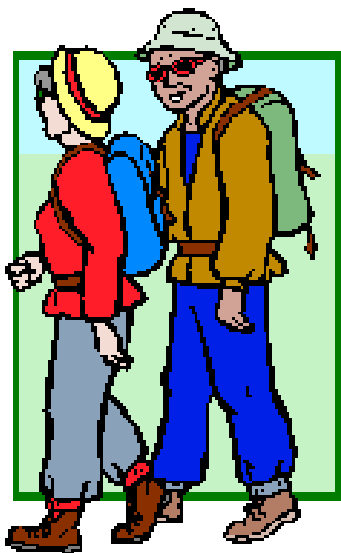
Not all ticks carry disease causing pathogens.

In the United States, ticks are capable of transmitting some disease causing pathogens. It is important to realize that not all ticks are infected with a bacteria or virus. In some areas of the country, tick-borne diseases are more common than other areas. For example, in the Northeastern part of the United States, Lyme Disease is far more common. This is due to the fact that the immature ticks feed on rodents, where they pick up the bacteria (in Louisiana they feed on reptiles, which do not harbor the bacteria). In the Northeastern U.S., as much as 50% of adult ticks are infected with the Lyme disease causing bacteria, *Borrelia burgdorferi*.

In addition to Lyme Disease, ticks are capable of transmitting other pathogens to humans and animals. This includes Anaplasmosis, Babesiosis, Ehrlichiosis, Powassan virus, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Tularemia, tick-borne relapsing fever, and STARI. Other potential tick-borne diseases are occasionally detected. Information on these diseases can be found at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website.



Many of the most common tick-borne diseases have similar symptoms. Most people will have flu-like symptoms. With Lyme disease, about a third of the infected people show a characteristic bulls-eye rash. This most commonly occurs at the site of the tick bite. Rocky Mountain spotted fever is part of the spotted fever group of pathogens. In severe cases, infected individuals will have a spotted rash, which mainly occurs on the arms and legs.



FIVE OF THE MOST COMMON TICKS IN THE UNITED STATES

ALTHOUGH THESE ARE THE MOST COMMON SPECIES IN THE U.S., MANY OF THESE SPECIES ARE QUITE



Black legged tick (*Ixodes scapularis*)

The black legged tick can transmit pathogens that cause Lyme disease, anaplasmosis and babesiosis. In the northeastern United States, the larvae and nymph blood feed on small mammals and rodents, where it can pick up bacteria that cause Lyme disease. In Louisiana, the early stages feed on reptiles, which do not harbor the Lyme disease bacteria.



Gulf Coast tick (*Amblyomma maculatum*)

The gulf coast tick lives in coastal areas along the Atlantic Coast and Gulf of Mexico. Larvae and nymphs of this species prefer to feed on birds and small rodents, while adult ticks feed on deer and other wildlife.



COMMON TICKS

RARE IN LOUISIANA.



Lone Star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*)

The lone star tick gets its name from the white dot on its back. This species prefers to feed on white-tailed deer. Larvae often occur in clusters on vegetation. The lone star tick actively crawls towards its hosts in search of a bloodmeal.



Brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*)

The brown dog tick prefers to blood feed on dogs for each of its life-stages. This species is capable of living indoors, where its host is most



American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*)

The American dog tick is widely distributed and prefers to feed on small mammals. This species often waits for hosts on the edges of fields, where dogs most often encounter them.

DID YOU KNOW?



FIRE ANTS HELPED TO DECREASE THE NUMBER OF TICKS
Since fire ants feed on insects and other arthropods close to the ground, it is no surprise that fire ants will readily feed on ticks. Fire ants in pastures can help reduce tick populations that may feed on livestock.

MOST TICKS TAKE SEVERAL DAYS TO FINISH FEEDING
On average, it might take 2 to 3 days for a tick to finish feeding on a host.

THERE ARE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM TICKS.

You can follow these simple steps to protect yourself from ticks:

1. Avoid direct contact with ticks by avoiding the wooded and bushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
2. Walk in the center of trails.
3. Select EPA registered repellents that repel ticks (DEET or permethrin) and apply according to label directions.
4. Find and remove ticks promptly after being outdoors.
5. Talk to your veterinarian about ways to protect your pets from ticks and tick-borne diseases.

HOW TO REMOVE A TICK

WHETHER IT IS ON YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY MEMBER, OR YOUR PET, HERE ARE THE DO'S AND DON'T'S WHEN IT COMES TO REMOVING

THE DRAWINGS TO THE RIGHT (FROM THE CDC WEBSITE) DEMONSTRATE THE CORRECT WAY TO REMOVE A TICK. FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW.

STEP 1. Grab the tick close to your skin with tweezers

STEP 2. Pull straight up

STEP 3. Wash the area with soap and water

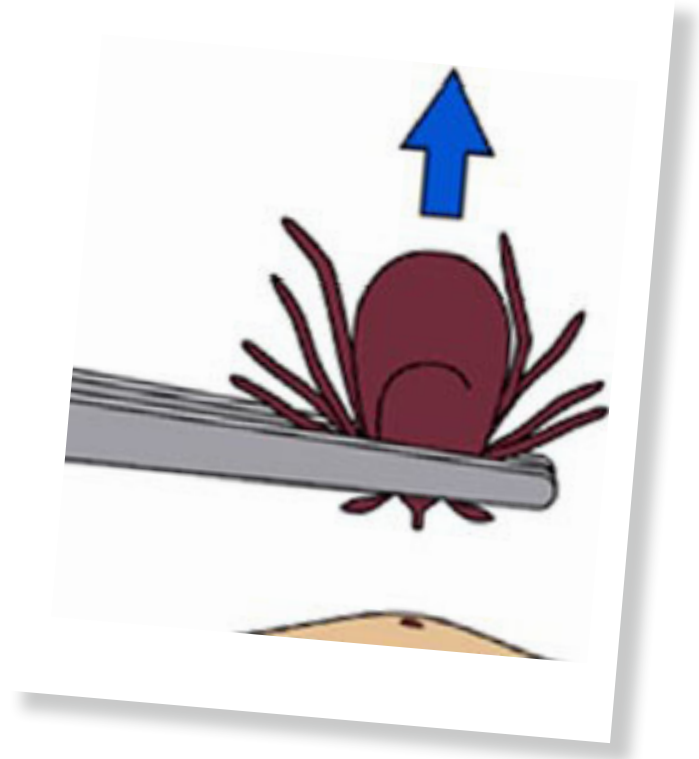
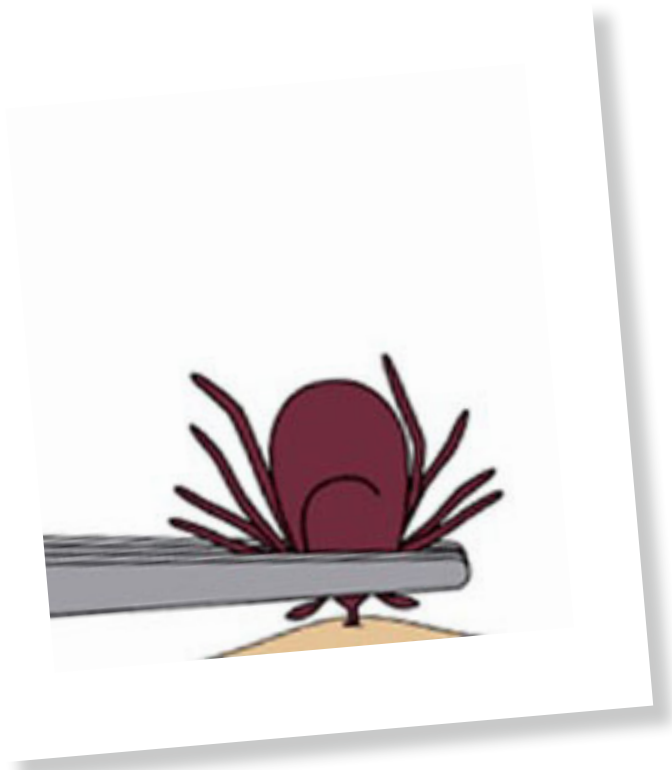
STEP 4. If you live in an area with Lyme Disease, some places may have facilities that will test the tick for you. In Louisiana, the likelihood of getting Lyme disease is very low. However, if you feel ill after a tick-bite, contact a physician for more information.

WHAT **NOT** TO DO:

Avoid "folklore" remedies such as painting the tick with nail polish or petroleum jelly, or using heat to make the tick detach from the skin. Some of these methods might make the tick more likely to quickly transmit bacteria into your body.

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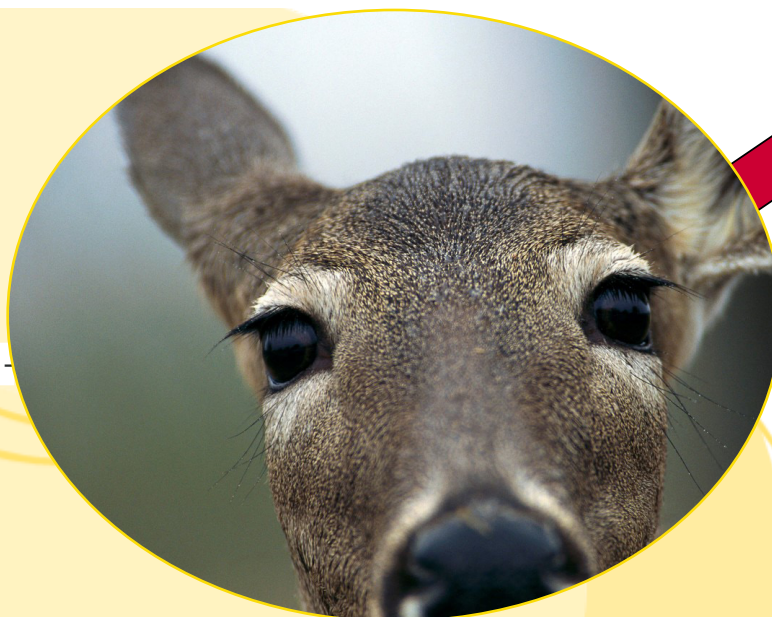
PET,



Ticks are related to spiders (they have 8 legs). However, they do not spin webs and do not eat insects.

FACTS ABOUT TICKS

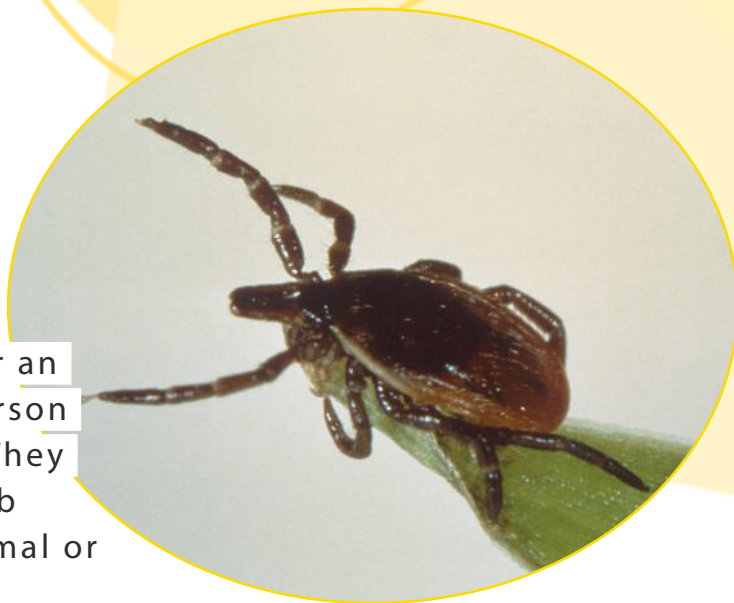
Ticks are so tiny, they can easily be mistaken for freckles or dirt.



Ticks live in places where there is a lot of tall grass, shrubs, and leaves.



Ticks wait for an animal or person to walk by. They will then grab onto the animal or human.



Tick bites usually do not hurt. Most people do not even notice they are being bitten.

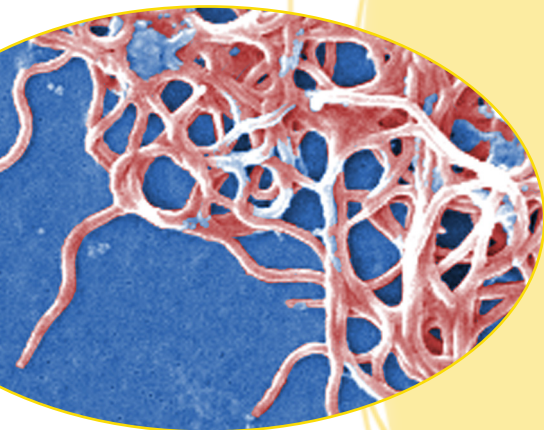
After climbing on a person, the tick will try to find a place to attach and feed. They often like to hide in the hair, or where clothing presses tightly against the skin (underwear)



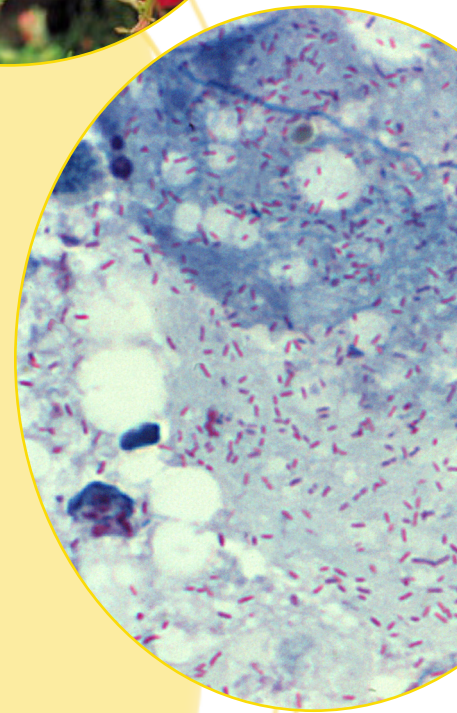
Ticks will stay attached for a few days. It takes several days to finish feeding on blood.



After feeding on blood, a tick will just fall to the ground. It might be several months before the tick feeds again.



COOL TICK FACTS



Not all ticks carry bacteria or viruses. Black-legged ticks are the species most often associated with Lyme Disease.

Brown dog ticks are the only species in Louisiana that can live indoors. Other species must live outside.



Lone star ticks get their name from having a single star shape on their body.

An adult female tick may lay thousands of eggs





FIND MORE ONLINE

GO TO THE
LSU ENTOMOLOGY
OR LSU AGCENTER
WEBPAGES FOR
MORE INFORMA-
TION ABOUT BITING
INSECTS.

The LSU Department of Entomology is committed to providing fun and informative information regarding all types of insects. If there is a specific insect you would like to see in one of our magazines, please contact the editor. We can also include special articles, if you are interested in writing a short article for our magazine.

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