



SPRING IS HERE & SO IS TICK SEASON!

All around, signs of spring abound. The trees are awakening from the dark winter months; flowering bulbs are pushing their way to greet the warmth of spring and the lovely sound of chirping birds are welcoming each day.

I simply adore this time of year. The beauty of the season warms my spirit. There is something about the longer days and warmer temperatures that make me feel that the possibilities that life holds are endless. I also find that I am much more productive at this time of year. During the winter months access to sunlight is significantly limited compared to this time of year. Gone are my feelings of snuggling under the covers the moment the temperatures drop and the sun goes down. Now it can be 6pm and the sun is still shining. I am busy taking advantage of the last few hours of daylight doing some of the activities I love such as taking my dogs for a nice long walk.

There is one thing I absolutely detest about this time of year. The ghastly insect known as the TICK! Now this is one four-letter word that just makes my stomach turn.

I know of the hazard that ticks present to us and our pets. Ticks carry diseases such as Lyme, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Anaplasmosis just to name a few. These diseases can be quite debilitating.

One of my own dogs, Snap, at the age of 7 was diagnosed with Anaplasmosis. The early stages of this disease can be difficult to diagnose. When she first came down with the disease she didn't show any outright signs of being sick. She was eating fine, seemed playful and happy yet some very subtle changes in her behavior made me feel that something was wrong. To the veterinarian's office we went and after several tests and lots of dollars spent the results pointed to Anaplasmosis. Fortunately I caught the disease early so she has recovered although over the past 2 years she has had some recurrences of the symptoms requiring subsequent treatment.

The best defense against tick borne diseases is prevention. Ask your veterinarian which type of product is appropriate for your animal. There are once-a-month topical insecticides, sprays, powders, dips, rinses and collars. None of these preventions are fool-proof however using them can greatly decrease your animal's chances of getting ill. When using any of these products follow the directions to the letter. Most of these products are animal specific so those for dogs should not be used for cats and vice versa. DEET is a common ingredient found in insect

repellents for humans. DO NOT use these on your animals as they can prove to be quite toxic.

A product that I've added to my own dogs tick preventative regiment is "Neem Protect" spray. Neem is a tree native to India. Ark Naturals, a company which makes all natural products for pets, sells the spray and it can be quite effective in protecting your pet. You can view their line of products at www.arknaturals.com.

When doing research on ticks, I fully expected that there was some positive side to their lifecycle. After all, why on earth would God create something that was only harmful to the environment? Well here is what I found. Guinea fowl, a bird species, consumes mass quantities of ticks! Just 2 birds can clear 2 acres of ticks in a single year! So, the next time you pass the PetMinders, Inc. mailbox and you see a long-necked bird with gray plumage and white spots you'll know that I've decided to see if the information I found in Wikipedia is in fact correct.

Have fun with your animals. They are counting on you to provide them with a safe, loving, nurturing environment.



Mary Lou Hanlon is a longtime resident of Warren and is the owner of PetMinders, Inc, The Kennel Alternative. PetMinders has been providing professional pet sitting and dog training lessons in the privacy of clients homes for over 15 years. Mary Lou is one of the nations top agility competitors. She has competed both nationally and internationally and has received numerous awards in both dog obedience as well as agility. She can be reached at 908-755-PETS(7387) or via email at petmindersinc@yahoo.com.