

Factsheet

Longhorned Tick: Information for Livestock and Pet Owners

The longhorned tick (*Haemaphysalis longicornis*) is native to eastern China, Japan, the Russian Far East, and Korea. It is an introduced/established exotic species in Australia/New Zealand and several island nations in the western Pacific Region. It can be a serious pest of livestock in these areas. In late 2017, the United States Department of Agriculture's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NSVL) confirmed the presence of the longhorned tick in the United States. Longhorned ticks are light brown in color and the adult female grows to the size of a pea when it is full of blood. Males are rare. Other stages of the tick are very small, about the size of a sesame seed or even smaller.

After the initial finding in New Jersey in 2017, animal health officials began examining how and when the tick arrived in the United States. As part of these efforts, they reexamined tick samples from past years and confirmed a longhorned tick from a sample collected in West Virginia in 2010. The tick has been confirmed in the following states: Arkansas, Kentucky, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland. They have been found infesting a number of hosts including sheep, goats, dogs, cats, horses, cattle, white-tailed deer, Virginia opossums, raccoons, coyotes, red-tailed hawks, red foxes, grey foxes, striped skunks, eastern cottontail rabbits, elk, groundhogs, and humans.

The widespread establishment of a new tick species in the United States is rare. It remains unknown how the longhorned tick first entered the country. Some possible routes of entry include entering on domestic pets, horses, livestock or humans. The longhorned tick can reproduce without a male. A single tick can create a population in a new location.

Impact of Longhorned Ticks

USDA and state animal health officials are concerned about the longhorned tick's impact on livestock. These ticks frequently form large infestations on warm-blooded host animals. This causes great stress on the animal, reducing its growth and production. A severe infestation can kill the animal due to blood loss.

While there have been no reports in the United States, the longhorned tick is known to transmit the agents of certain livestock and human diseases in other countries including: anaplasmosis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, theileriosis and rickettsiosis, as well as several viruses.

Protecting Livestock & Pets

Regular tick treatments and prevention measures for livestock and pets should be effective against the longhorned tick. Animal owners (both pet and livestock owners) should consult their veterinarian regarding which tick prevention products to use on their animals.

Livestock owners should use tick prevention practices on their feedlots and pastures, such as keeping grass and weeds trimmed and clearing away brush.

Removing a Tick Safely

If you find a tick attached to an animal or a person, you should remove it immediately. Use fine-tipped tweezers if at all possible. If they are not available, improvise by shielding your fingers with tissue paper, a foil-covered gum wrapper, or plastic sandwich bag.

Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible, pulling upward with steady, even pressure. Do not twist the tick as you remove it – this may cause the tick’s mouthparts to remain in the skin, which increases the risk of infection. Do not try to suffocate the tick with alcohol-soaked cotton – this will cause the tick to regurgitate while its mouthparts are still in the skin, which also increases the risk of infection. Do not use hot match heads or petroleum jelly for tick removal.

After removing the tick, wash the affected area with soap and water. Then disinfect the bite with a topical antiseptic.

Put the tick in a zip-top bag and seal it closed. Give the bagged tick to your veterinarian or doctor for examination.

For More Information

For human health and tick information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/features/stopticks/index.html>.

You may also contact the APHIS Cattle Health Center at VS.SPRS.CattleHealthCenter@aphis.usda.gov or visit these partner websites:
<https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/index.html>
<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/tick/>
<http://tickapp.tamu.edu/tickbiteprevention.html>