

## **TICK CONTROL IN HORSES**

Spring is here and Summer is on its way, which is the best time of year for most of us! But with the change of season has come the abundance of ticks found on our horses. Tick bites can cause local skin reactions and tissue irritation which can result in our horses constantly rubbing resulting in hair loss; hair coat damage; anaemia due to blood loss (in very severe cases) and the transmission of diseases such as equine piroplasmiasis, commonly known as biliary in horses. Ticks are not species-specific so the same ticks that feed on your horse can also feed on your dog or even you.

### **Reduce tick exposure by:**

- Keeping pastures mowed and short
- Removing bush and weeds from paddocks (remove or burn possible tick habitats)
- Free range chickens are great at picking up and eating ticks around the stable yard
- Using topical insecticides such as pyrethroid or permethrin products applied before riding out or being put into the paddock. Quadrepel or Summerspray are our suggested products
- Apply tick grease
- Dipping horses with a dip registered for use in horse. Bayticol and Supadip can be used. Very important to NEVER use an Amitraz or unlicensed dip in horses!
- Injectable ivermectin products may be short lived and the injections can cause a local inflammatory reaction.

### **Frequent examination and removal of ticks is very important. Inspect your horse for ticks by thorough and systematic inspection:**

- Begin at the horse's head, examine both ears and feel inside of each ear, examine the false nostrils visually and feel each with the forefinger
- Move to the forelock and examine the forelock, continuing down the mane to the withers
- Examine the soft tissue between the bones that make up the lower jaw, using flattened hand and fingers, feeling for any unevenness of the skin
- Examine the girth area of one side, visually and through palpation
- Examine the posterior fetlock to the coronet of the front foot, visually and through palpation
- Visually examine the udder/scrotum area on one side

- Examine the tail and perineum, visually and through palpation
- Examine the posterior fetlock to the coronet of the back foot, visually and through palpation
- Visually examine the udder/scrotum of the other side
- Examine the posterior fetlock to the coronet of the other back foot, visually and through palpation
- Examine the posterior fetlock to the coronet of the other front foot, visually and through palpation
- Wash your hands after examining each animal.

### **What should I do if I find a tick?**

Horses get ticks! Do not panic! Exposure of horses to ticks is not necessarily a bad thing. Too many ticks on the other hand is a problem. Some horses can build up a natural immunity to ticks and tick-borne diseases but on the other hand some horses are tick “magnets”. Ideally, we do want to expose our horses so they can build up an immunity, we cannot create a sterile environment.

Ideal method of tick removal is to get the tick to detach by spraying the tick/ticks with a pyrethroid or pyrethrin containing product, then, repeatedly spraying the tick/ticks again within one minute. Ticks will fall off after treatment.

Do NOT use any of the old wives’ tale methods to remove ticks, such as applying nail polish, petroleum jelly, 70 percent isopropyl alcohol or a hot match to the attached tick. These methods can stimulate a tick to secrete more saliva, cause regurgitation and introduce other tick-body secretions or excretions into the wound. These methods do not cause the tick to “detach” from an attachment site. These procedures may increase the risk of tick-borne disease transmission as well as secondary infection around the bite location. The best method is to implement the following procedure:

- Use a blunt curved forceps, grasp the tick as close to the skin surface as possible and pull upward with a steady even pressure
- Avoid squashing, crushing, or puncturing the tick’s body, this can expel material into the attachment site while removing the tick from the host
- Wash the bite site with soap and water

Please feel free to contact Cape Vet Equine if you have questions on tick control or the diseases they can transmit to your horses