



"Encouraging awareness, prevention & treatment of Lyme Disease (Borreliosis) in Ireland."

Tick Talking While You're Walking – Tick Survey Ireland

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/B3XTJL2>

Since May 30 2011 we've been asking members of the republic to report on any ticks spotted here in Ireland. As of May 30, 2014 a total of 100 people have responded so far. Here are some of the interesting snippets from our survey:

County of residence of our respondents was as follows:

The majority of our responders (51%) reside in the West of Ireland, followed by 17% in the East, 13% in the Northern/Border counties, 6% in the midlands & 4% Northern Ireland. 9% of responders did not specify.

How many ticks were spotted on each occasion?

The majority of our responses (55%) spotted 1 or 2 ticks, 16% reported 3-5, 8% found 6-10 ticks, 5% found 11-20, 3% found 21-40 & a further 12% said they spotted 'numerous' ticks on each occasion.

As many types of animal can carry ticks including birds, mice, squirrels, hedgehogs, pets, farm animals as well deer this can increase the number of ticks being carried around on hosts. Smaller birds & mammals are ideal for the smaller nymph ticks, whereas adult ticks would target the larger group of animals. Female ticks can lay 2,000 eggs resulting in large numbers being found in one area. Humans become accidental hosts when the ticks look for a blood meal or can become infected when a pet carries a tick into the house.

Which month were ticks typically found?

Early summer was most often reported - 32% of ticks were spotted June & 23% July. 11% of ticks were found in May & 7% in August. 10% of responders saw ticks throughout all of Spring & Summer.

It is important to note that children's summer holidays falls at the same time ticks are most active therefore good prevention measures are needed both in the garden & whilst out playing or walking. Ticks can survive winter conditions if plenty of leaf litter is available on the ground. Very icy temperatures can knock back their numbers; however they are able to [survive](#) if there is snow on the ground which can act as an insulating layer.

Ticks prefer damp areas as they can dehydrate rapidly, so would typically be found in forested areas, tall grass that hasn't been trimmed back during the summer, or autumn/winter leaf litter. Tips such as keeping grass closely cut during the summer, clearing leaf litter & trimming back edges of garden areas should help to prevent ticks coming into your area. Also use DEET on humans & tick repellants on animals before going out walking. Tucking trousers into socks whilst out rambling & regular tick checks can also go a long way to minimize the risk of tick-borne infections. We have posted tips for correct tick [removal](#) on our site as well as preventative methods.

NB: Ticks are also active in the Autumn however few tick numbers are being reported in our survey. This may be due to people spending more time indoors & may not come across them as regularly as they do in the summer.

Enter the location your tick was found (by county)

63% of ticks were spotted in the West of Ireland, 14% in the East, 13% in Northern/Border Counties, 6% in the Midlands & 3% in Northern Ireland (one responder did not specify).

The most common area for ticks was an overwhelming 21% in Galway, 16% in Cork, 14% in Kerry & 6% Donegal.

The remainder were found (in ascending order); Clare, Dublin, Mayo, Leitrim, N Ireland, Wicklow, Wexford, Laois, Offaly, Tipperary, Sligo, Kildare, Waterford, Limerick, Louth, Kilkenny & Westmeath.

Which type of landscape were ticks found?

47% of ticks were found in tall grasses, 22% in private gardens.

The rest were found in forested & lakeside areas, heath land, national parks & sand dunes. Some reports of ticks were found on farms, public parks & in leaf litter, with some being found in the house carried in by family pets. Two had spotted ticks whilst camping & one in a children's play area.

What was the activity at the time of the bite/or when ticks were spotted?

46% of ticks were found whilst walking, 16% whilst gardening.

The rest were found whilst camping, farming, grooming, hunting & jogging. There were reports of children picking up ticks whilst playing & some were found on return from brownie or scout meets.

Where was the tick found? (i.e. pet, adult or child?)

54% of ticks were found on adults, 35% on dogs, 20% on children, 7% on cats & 3% on a horse.

Some reported ticks found in pet beds, in carpeting, inside a tent or on the family sofa.

Was the tick attached when found?

87% of people reported that the ticks were attached to the skin when found (ie embedded).

13% reported that the tick was found crawling over the skin (but NOT embedded).

54% of our respondents who had an embedded tick noticed that the tick was engorged when found, which indicates the tick has been feeding for some time. This greatly increases the chance of transmission of Lyme Disease if the tick was in fact infected with Lyme causing (borrelia) bacteria.

How was the tick removed?

39% used tweezers, 37% of people used fingernails to remove the tick, 9% use tick twisters, 2% asked a vet for assistance & 1% asked a GP or nurse to help remove the tick.

The remainder used Vaseline or nail varnish to remove the embedded tick. A cotton thread was also used which is handy tip if tweezers or a tick twister is unavailable. Loop the cotton thread around the head of the tick close to the skin & pull upwards slowly, making sure to remove the head cleanly.

Incorrect removal can increase your chance of infection. It is advised not to touch the tick, use Vaseline or burn the tick. A distressed tick may regurgitate its blood meal, increasing the risk of infection. NB: For correct tick removal please go to <http://ticktalkireland.org/>

Please find below a few places that were mentioned in our tick survey:

In Donegal a resident found approx 10 ticks throughout the months of May, June & July. A child was bitten by a tick in Country Donegal after a day out on the beach & countryside. The tick was engorged when found in June.

40 ticks were spotted in Ards Forest Park, Donegal during the month of July 2011. A further 25-30 ticks were found by a walker in heath land at Glenties, Co. Donegal, during June 2012.

A tick was found on a child after visiting a national park in Armagh in May.

8 ticks were found on an adult & a dog whilst gardening in Sligo (June 2011). Lots of ticks found on a farm in Coolaney, Co Sligo between May & August 2012.

A dog walker reported more than 20 ticks whilst walking in Ofally, during the months of May & June.

2 or more ticks have been seen every month in a garden in County Laois (2010/2011).

3 were found in Waterford whilst out gardening (July 2011).

A tick was found on a child after visiting Bray Head in County Wicklow in June.

One walker reported 'lots' of ticks spotted whilst walking in Mayo in July, some ticks were found attached to the skin. Numerous ticks were found in a forested area in Ballinrobe area, Co. Mayo during the months of June & July.

10 ticks were found on a sheep farm in Tipperary (June).

A group of 21 travelling in the Burren area & Aran Islands reported spotting 4 ticks (July 2011). A child on a farm in County Clare had an engorged tick (June).

More than 15 ticks were found on a dog after exploring land in County Cork (Feb 2011). 12 ticks were found after a trip to Glencariff in Cork, May 2012. A resident in County Cork has found ticks many times in the garden throughout 2000-2011 & have been bitten on several occasions.

30 ticks were found whilst camping in Killarney, Co. Kerry. Some ticks were engorged when found (June 2011), 2 more were reported in Killarney in Oct 2010. A 4 year old child was bitten by a tick in County Kerry whilst out playing in June. An adult & child were bitten after a picnic on Great Basket Island, Co Kerry in Aug 2013.

A walker & pet owner reported several ticks found in Ross Island & Killarney National Park, Co. Kerry during the months of May to August 2011. Some ticks were attached when found. A walker found numerous ticks in Waterville, Kerry during the summer months, among ferns in a mountainous area.

A resident in West of Galway is reporting 2 or 3 ticks found weekly whilst walking their dog since April 2011. Lots more found on a dog after walks in Gort, Co Galway, during the month of June 2012.

A walker found 12 ticks on themselves & their family pet after a trip to Portumna Forest (Co. Galway) in July, another walker found 8 ticks after a trip to Portumna Forest in March.

A resident found 6 ticks whilst walking in gardens in West Galway in June & another found more than 10 ticks on humans, pets & in the house in Galway in May. Several ticks have been found by Galway residents whilst gardening at various times through the year.

Inisheer (Aran Islands) Galway: 10 ticks spotted whilst out camping (July 2011). 15-20 ticks found at a campsite in Inishmore (Aran Islands) May 2012. 3 ticks also while camping in Connemara, May 2013.

Vet Study

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/L395BSB>

In the summer of 2011/2012 we asked vets to report on how many ticks were seen on companion & farm animals in Ireland. We received only 9 responses; however a summary is available as follows:

How many ticks were found on each occasion?

56% found between 1-2 ticks

22% found between 3-10 ticks

22% found between 11-30 ticks

What type of animal were ticks found (including pets as well as farm animals)?

78% ticks were found on dogs, the remainder on a cat & cattle

What was the reason for the vet visit at the time?

56% of pets were brought in for routine vaccinations when the ticks were reported

33% of owners had bought the animal in for tick removal

11% animals brought in during ill health

If ill-health, which tick-borne illness did you suspect?

The vet suspected louping ill / babesiosis & ehrlichiosis, this was not confirmed by testing at the time of the survey. One dog was reported to have an enlarged spleen following multiple tick bites.

In Summary

The survey identifies that vets & the general public are spotting many ticks at one time, for instance 55% our public responders spotted 1-2 ticks, with the rest spotting many more. Similarly, 56% of our vet respondents spotted 1-2 ticks on each occasion, whilst the remainder spotted more.

It is important to note from both the general public & vet studies that dogs are a greater risk for bringing ticks into close vicinity to humans. They like to brush past tall grasses & ticks can be easily latched in their fur. Although there are some great tick repellants products available, they are designed to repel not actually kill the ticks & some are less effective than others at deterring them, therefore extra vigilance is required when walking your pet in the countryside. If a tick does latch onto the dog it may be brought into your home & land on bedding, furniture or feed on the dog & drop off into the garden – an added danger when an adult tick is ready to lay its eggs. Routine tick checks will help to minimize the risk of tick-borne infections being passed onto you or your dog. Signs of Lyme infection in pets can include lameness & fatigue. For details on how to protect your family from tick-borne infections, check out our downloadable [leaflet](#) or feel free to [contact us](#) for a bulk order of leaflets for your local vet, library, hospital, church, walking or sports club. The [HSE](#) also has tips on how to best protect the family from Lyme Disease. The true incidence of Lyme Disease is currently unknown in Ireland; from September 2011 it has now been classed as a [notifiable](#) disease. However, only lab confirmed neurological cases are reportable to the health department.

We have published some recent figures from our Lyme in Ireland [survey](#) showing how the illness can affect patients & the problems they face with regards to testing & treatment.