Tick talk Six common tick questions — and what one K-State expert has to say about them

By Abbigail Marshall, News and Communications Services

For many, longer days and warmer weather mean more time outside. Whether hitting the trails or spending evenings in the backyard, extra hours outdoors have plenty of benefits. They also welcome unwanted visitors: ticks.

A little knowledge can go a long way toward staying prepared and staying safe during the height of tick season. Cassandra Olds, assistant professor in Kansas State University's Department of Entomology, shares what you should know.

1. Do ticks jump or fly?

No — in fact, they don't like moving much at all.

Many ticks can't see. Instead, they use Haller's organs — or leg sensors — to locate hosts and navigate their environment. Once they've sensed a host they like, they release from their sitting place and attach.

"If I put a tick in the corner of this room, it's going to stay in that corner. They don't find you but instead wait for you to find it," Olds said. "That's why they sometimes look like they're dancing and waving their legs around; they're busy smelling the air."

In addition to not flying or jumping, ticks don't normally fall from trees, contrary to popular belief, Olds said.

"Ticks just like wooded areas. Since trees release water vapor, and a tick's biggest fear is drying out, we tend to find them around trees," she said. "But they're not falling or jumping from them. If you find a tick on your head or neck, it most likely found your leg and crawled its way up."

In short: Ticks don't jump or fly; they wait for a host to brush by to attach.

2. Why are there so many ticks lately?

Temperature drives most aspects of ticks and insects.

Ticks have a relatively long life cycle, with the journey from larva to adulthood taking around two to three years. Pair this with rising temperatures and humidity, Olds says, and there are more ticks. Why? While ticks are still hatching, they aren't dying

"Winter kills off a lot of ticks. We've had milder winters these past few years, so fewer ticks have frozen and died, but they're still mating," she said.

The list of favorable tick conditions doesn't end there; warmer temperatures and higher rainfall also lead to increased grass growth, providing further protection for ticks. This is also why tick populations are large in subtropical regions near the equator.

Finally, increased awareness and activity together have made people more tuned in to tick news.

"A couple of years ago, no one really knew what Alpha-gal syndrome was," Olds said. "All of the environmental factors, coupled with increased diagnoses of tick-borne illness, make it look like a big, mysterious boom, but we know why it's happening."

In short: Mild winters, increased heat and humidity, and growth in awareness have all contributed to more noticeable tick activity.

3. How do you check for and remove ticks?

Each type of tick tends to prefer different attachment sites, but in general, Olds says they gravitate toward warm, tight and moist areas of the body.

"For example, with the lone star tick, we generally find them around the waistband area or, for me, between my shoulder blades," she said.

After spending time outdoors, Olds recommends placing your clothes directly into the washer and performing a thorough tick check, paying close attention to your scalp and hairline. If possible, ask someone to check areas that are difficult to see.

If you find a tick, remove it as soon as possible. No extreme measures are necessary. Olds recommends simply pulling it off.

"Don't agitate it, which means don't smother or burn it. That can cause the tick to burrow deeper or become crushed, which may cause it to regurgitate more saliva and increase your risk of infection," she said. "Your fingers give you the best grip, but use tweezers if you aren't comfortable using your hands. Grab the tick as close to the skin as possible, apply steady pressure and pull straight away."

Once you've removed the tick, place it in a resealable plastic bag and store it in the freezer. Keeping the tick makes it easier to accurately identify the species and determine which diseases it may carry, narrowing the list of symptoms to watch for. If you're concerned about disease transmission, you can also have the tick tested for pathogens.

In short: Wash clothes immediately after time spent outdoors, and check your body and pets thoroughly. If you find a tick, don't agitate it; use your fingers to quickly pull it straight out.

4. If I get a tick bite, will I get sick?

Not necessarily.

The best way to reduce the risk of a tick-borne illness is to remove a tick before it latches onto the skin. If a tick has already attached, remove it as quickly as possible. In general, the longer a tick remains attached, the greater the chance it will transmit disease through its saliva.

However, a tick bite doesn't always lead to illness.

"I just got bitten earlier this summer by 21 ticks, and I'm completely fine," Olds said. "But someone else could get bitten by one tick and develop a disease."

The risk depends on the tick species and the disease involved. For example, infected deer ticks that carry Lyme disease typically must remain attached for approximately 24 to 48 hours before transmitting the bacteria that cause the disease.

Lone star ticks, on the other hand, don't follow the same pattern. The development of Alpha-gal syndrome is not directly tied to how long the tick is attached. Instead, it's an allergic response rather than a pathogen-caused disease, Olds said.

"It's really up to the body to determine whether this syndrome happens," she said. "The tick's saliva and red meat both contain Alpha-gal, a sugar molecule. When a lone star tick bites, the body either says, 'I'm not concerned about this,' or 'I'm very concerned about this.'"

While there's no universal timeline for when a tick can transmit disease, bite prevention and prompt removal remain the best ways to reduce your risk of illness.

In short: A tick bite doesn't always mean getting sick — illness risk depends on the tick species and the disease it carries, how quickly the tick is removed, and the body's response to foreign material in its saliva.

5. How can I protect my pet from ticks?

For domestic pets that spend time outdoors, regular time in the backyard is generally not a major concern. However, after hikes or walks on wooded trails, Olds recommends thoroughly checking pets for ticks, paying close attention to the ears, head, under the legs and around the tail.

Whether pets spend most of their time indoors or outdoors, they should stay up to date on routine flea and tick prevention. While many over-the-counter and natural products are available, Olds recommends using veterinarian-prescribed treatments.

"Go directly to your veterinarian and get a product that is prescription-based. There are many products on Amazon that are cheap, but less effective, and many 'natural' products contain garlic, which is toxic to both cats and dogs," she said. "Pyrethroids, which are one of the best ways to control ticks, come from flowers, so a lot of the prescription products that we have originated from a natural source; we've just made them much more effective."

In short: Use veterinarian-recommended tick prevention and check pets thoroughly after outdoor activities. Avoid products that contain any pet allergens or toxins.

6. How can I prevent my livestock from ticks?

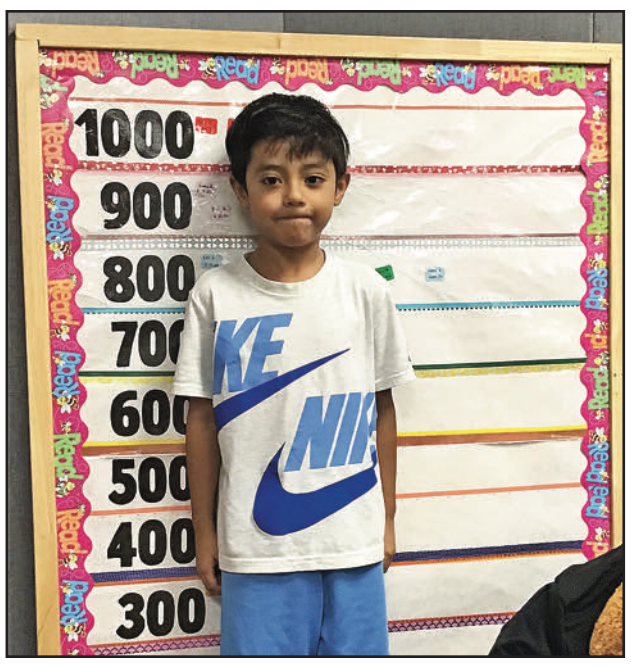
For livestock, tick prevention depends on several factors, including the size of the operation, the number of animals, how often they can be checked and local tick populations. Because of those variables, Olds said there is no universal approach to tick control.

Horse owners, in particular, should keep tick prevention top of mind. Because horses have sensitive skin, Olds recommends staying up to date on veterinarian-recommended tick-control products. Daily application of newer bio-based repellents can also help reduce tick exposure when horses can be handled regularly.

While blacklegged ticks, which can transmit Lyme disease, are relatively uncommon in Kansas, Olds said horse owners should remain aware of the risk as tick populations shift with changing climate conditions. In areas where blacklegged ticks are established, owners should watch for potential neurological signs associated with Lyme disease and discuss prevention strategies with their veterinarian.

Kansas livestock producers and farm-animal owners have access to a resource through Olds that is uncommon in many states: a veterinary entomologist. She encourages producers who want to improve their tick management or better understand the species and disease risks on their property to reach out for guidance.

"I always say any livestock producer who is interested in being better about their tick control, looking at what ticks they have and the risks they pose, can always contact me and we will develop a tailored plan for their operation specifically," she said.



Elijah has experienced 900 books in the Stevens County Library's 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten challenge. You're in the home stretch Elijah! You can do it!

PUBLIC NOTICE

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NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING TO EXCEED REVENUE NEUTRAL RATE AND BUDGET HEARING

State of Kansas
Special District
2027

The governing body of
Cemetery District #1
Stevens County

will meet on 9/3/2025 at 5:15 p.m. at Hugoton City Hall for the purpose of hearing and answering objections of taxpayers relating to the proposed use of all funds and the amount of tax to levied. Detailed budget information is available at Hugoton City Hall and will be available at this hearing.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Proposed Budget 2027 Expenditures and Amount of 2026 Ad Valorem Tax establish the maximum limits of the 2027 budget. Estimated Tax Rate is subject to change depending on the final assessed valuation.

	Prior Year Actual 2025		Current Year Estimate for 2026		Proposed Budget Year for 2027		
FUND	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Expenditures	Actual Tax Rate*	Budget Authority for Expenditures	Amount of 2026 Ad Valorem Tax	Estimate Tax Rate*
General	239,625	3.832	239,498	2.871	1,659,685	308,000	3.526
Debt Service							
Totals	239,625	3.832	239,498	2.871	1,659,685	308,000	3.526
*Revenue Neutral Rate***							*3.537*
Less: Transfers	0		0		0		
Net Expenditures	239,625		239,498		1,659,685		
Total Tax Levied	308,923		308,989		xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx		
Assessed Valuation	80,601,208		107,621,090		87,351,727		

Outstanding Indebtedness, Jan 1,

	2024	2025	2026
G.O. Bonds	0	0	0
Revenue Bonds	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Lease Pur. Princ.	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0

*Tax rates are expressed in mills.

***Revenue Neutral Rate as defined by 2021 Kansas Senate Bill 13.*

Carrie L. Baeza