Did You Know?

Tick

Of the about 800 species of ticks worldwide, 90% are associated with wild mammals, birds and reptiles. The other 10% can transmit disease to humans (such as rickettsiosis and Lyme disease) and domestic animals (like babesiosis and swine fever). There are two main types of tick: Argasid ticks (soft-bodied ticks) have as many as seven immature stages and several blood feeding episodes at each stage. Ixodid ticks (hard-bodied ticks) have three distinct stages. All ticks need blood at every stage of their life cycle.

Many tick species are host specific and do not stray far from their preferred hosts because they are obligate blood feeders. Soft ticks tend to stay within the nest or burrows of their hosts. In contrast, hard ticks usually five apart from their hosts, in soil (leaf litter), between their three blood feeding episodes. Deer tick mouthparts have a large hooked probe that the tick uses to stay attached to the host for three to five days or longer. The adult female takes an extremely large blood meal to provide the necessary protein for egg development.

Two-year Life Cycle of the Deer Tick

The deer tick — host = white-tailed deer. — There are four stages in the life cycle of the deer tick. Deer ticks have long narrow heads and narrow bodies. Each tick stage is separated by periods of no feeding. Deer ticks usually have three blood meals during each feeding stage. Deer ticks can live as long as five years. They spend most of their time on animal hosts. The first stages are the larval, nymphal, and adult stages. The larval stage is the only feeding stage. In fall, adult females will lay eggs in the fall. The eggs hatch the following spring. The nymphal stage lives for about three weeks before molting to the adult stage. The adult stage feeds on blood and produces eggs.