Tick
**TICK**

**FAMILY:** Taxodidae  
**ORDER:** Acarina

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**IDENTIFICATION CLUES**

- 1/12 - 1/4 inch long
- oval shape; head-thorax and abdomen are not separate
- can be soft or have a hard shield on the back
- 4 pairs of jointed legs
- jaw modified into a piercing stylet for sucking blood from prey

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**Where to Look:**
Ticks are found in woods and grassy fields. They are often found in the nests or dens of animals or attached to their host.

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**Who Eats It?**
Ticks have few predators but ants, centipedes, toads and wild turkey will feed on ticks.

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**LIFE CYCLE**
Most ticks lay eggs. The larva hatches and has 6 legs. It attaches to a host and feeds for several days, then drops off and molts. The nymph stage has 8 legs and attaches to a new host and feeds for several more days before molting again as an adult tick.

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**What It Eats.**
Ticks are parasites and feed on the blood of birds, mammals and reptiles. They attach with a dart-like anchor with backward curving teeth just below the mouth.

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**Role in the Ecosystem**
Ticks can spread diseases as they move from host to host and indirectly play a role in population control.

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**Did You Know**
Ticks carry several serious human diseases including Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Lyme disease. Ticks inject an anesthetic chemical into the host so that it doesn’t know it is there.