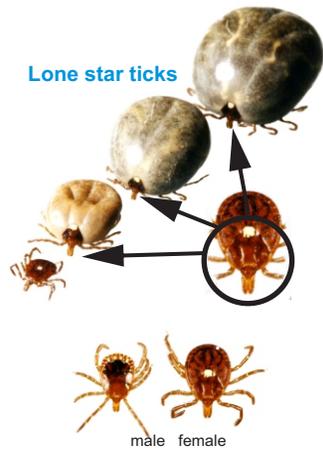


# Basic Tick Identification

First is to recognize the pest is a tick, then determine to what group the tick belongs. It sounds simple enough but is difficult because ticks are small and difficult to see clearly without a magnifier. We encounter most ticks after they have attached and fed for some amount of time. Once the female tick begins feeding, known as engorging, she increases in size. This is the aspect of female ticks that amazes people and leads to misidentification. The female tick, not the male, will enlarge its size 20 to 50 times during feeding (200 times its weight) and looks nothing like its pre-engorgement size. Each tick group picture shows the female tick from normal through three levels of engorgement. It's hard to believe they are the same pest. Because the male tick feeds on very small amounts of blood, its size does not change.



The female Lone star tick was chosen as the best example because her white spot clearly defines the upper portion of her dorsal shield. The dorsal shield is the area from the point of the mouthparts up to the white dot (circled left). The dorsal shield does not change throughout the engorgement process. Even with the significant size changes shown in the four pictures of her engorgement, you can see that the shield remains the same. The shield rotates upright/forward as the rear portion enlarges. With practice and by using only the dorsal shield as your reference, you can make a basic identification of tick species.



The Deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). The Ixodes group includes Western black-legged, Black legged, Deer tick, Groundhog tick, and many others - they look alike and transmit the same variety of diseases.

Nymphs are the most dangerous because they are extremely tiny. An unengorged nymph is about the size of this period "." while the engorged nymph is the size of this "o." Nymphs can feed unnoticed and because of this fact are known to transmit most cases of Lyme disease.



The Brown dog tick (*Rhipicephalus sanguineus*) is at times mistaken for the Deer tick in later stages of engorgement because of the similar appearance of the dorsal shields. The most noticeable difference between the two species is that the mouthparts are shorter on the Brown dog tick. NOTE: Attachment to humans is uncommon. Brown dog ticks often infest homes.

American dog tick (*Dermacentor variabilis*) looks like the Gulf Coast tick and the Rocky Mountain wood tick. The dorsal shield design varies, and the mouthparts vary so pictures will be important to differentiate between these species. The American dog tick favors the Eastern US while the Rocky Mt. wood tick favors the Western US.



Additional information at [www.tickinfo.com](http://www.tickinfo.com)

NOTE: ALL TICKS ENLARGED TO SHOW DETAIL