

Manicured greenspaces harbor infected ticks

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It was once thought that well-kept, manicured yards, for instance, were safe and free of ticks. No longer. As this study finds, ticks can be found even in the most well-groomed recreational spaces.

In their study, [“Ticks and Tick-Borne Pathogens in Recreational Greenspaces in North Central Florida, USA.”](#) Bhosale and colleagues examined the potential risk of encountering ticks in recreational greenspaces, particularly in groomed areas.¹

“We hypothesized that the habitat composition within greenspaces, whether it was natural habitat or manicured turf, would impact the abundance of ticks and prevalence of tick-borne disease agents,” they wrote.

Do ticks reside in well-kept, manicured yards and greenspaces?

The authors collected ticks along trails at 17 recreational areas in and near Gainesville, FL. They found 6 tick species which harbored 18 different species of bacteria or protozoa within the Babesia, *Borrelia*, Cytauxzoon, Cryptoplasma (Alloccryptoplasma), Ehrlichia, Hepatozoon, Rickettsia, and Theileria genera.

“While tick abundance and associated microorganism prevalence and richness were the greatest in natural habitats surrounded by forests, we found both ticks and pathogenic microorganisms in manicured groundcover,” the authors wrote.

Encountering an infected tick is “measurable and substantial even on closely manicured turf or gravel, if the surrounding landcover is undeveloped.”

They found that 5 out of the 6 tick species harbored many tick-borne pathogens. Some of these have not yet been described and “could still be of emerging medical or veterinary importance,” the authors point out.

The study found, that “even in manicured turf and landscaping, infected ticks occurred along walking trails and paths, particularly when those manicured habitats were surrounded by moderate amounts of undeveloped landcover.”

The presence of infected ticks in manicured areas suggests the environmental conditions in these spaces is sufficient for ticks to thrive and pose a health risk.

The authors’ conclude:

- “Overall, the detection of co-infections in our ticks adds to the complexity of the tick pathogen microbiome and suggests the need for continuing research on the importance of co-infections for

both human and animal health.”

- “While we found the highest diversity and abundance of ticks and pathogens in natural habitat within greenspaces, we also found a substantial subset in manicured habitats including turf lawn, picnic areas, or along paved pathways.”

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References:

1. Bhosale CR, Wilson KN, Ledger KJ, White ZS, Dorleans R, De Jesus CE, Wisely SM. Ticks and Tick-Borne Pathogens in Recreational Greenspaces in North Central Florida, USA. *Microorganisms*. 2023; 11(3):756. <https://doi.org/10.3390/microorganisms11030756>

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