

## **When do ticks quest, waiting for their next meal?**

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So far, research has focused on questing behavior primarily in the laboratory. “Ticks must balance the need to quest for blood meal hosts with the risk of desiccation, all on a fixed energy budget,” [writes Thomas from Washington State University.](#) <sup>1</sup>

But Thomas and his team wanted to investigate questing patterns in a natural habitat. “We measured questing activity of nymphs and larvae throughout the day and night and over several weeks in enclosures across a range of suitable tick habitats within a site in the Northeast,” he writes.

They found that the activity of nymphs increased slightly during dawn and dusk, the opposite of larvae. But their findings could not be replicated at other sites. Questing behavior was also not impacted by temperature, relative humidity, light-dark cycles and energy reserves.

“Rather it appears a fraction of ticks were questing most of the time, regardless of conditions,” he writes. “Our study suggests neither climatic conditions or light-dark cycles have appreciable influence on tick questing behavior.”

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### **References:**

1. Thomas CE, Burton ES, Brunner JL. Environmental Drivers of Questing Activity of Juvenile Black-Legged Ticks (Acari: Ixodidae): Temperature, Desiccation Risk, and Diel Cycles. J Med Entomol. 2019.

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