

# Heathcote Veterinary Clinic

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Hospital Hours  
Monday to Friday 9.00am – 7.00pm  
Saturday from 9.00am  
Sunday 9.00am – 12.00pm

## Paralysis Tick Toxicity

Paralysis ticks are extremely common along the East coast of Australia, especially near bushland. Unfortunately that makes our area (Helensburgh to Yarrowarra) a prime target! We commonly see ticks between August and February, though they can be present all year round due to warm and humid weather. Tick paralysis is very serious and unpredictable and can quite often be fatal if not treated in time. With ticks, prevention is the best form of treatment as sometimes even animals that start on tick paralysis treatment will not survive.

### What are the symptoms of tick paralysis?

The toxin binds to nerves causing paralysis of muscles throughout the body.

- Wobbliness and paralysis in the hind legs
- Laboured Breathing
- Change of bark/meow - becomes more high pitched/squeaky
- Difficulty swallowing resulting in drooling
- Coughing/Gagging
- Vomiting/dry retching

If your pet displays any of these signs TREATMENT IS ESSENTIAL as soon as possible. Even if the tick has already been killed and removed, clinical signs will continue to worsen due to the toxin still circulating in your pet's blood stream. Remember TICKS CAN KILL!

### What should I do if I find or suspect my pet has a tick?

- Keep yourself and your pet calm
- Search for a tick and use a pair of tweezers flat against the coat to remove it. Bring to the vet for identification. Keep in mind there may be more than one.
- Call our clinic and tell us exactly what signs your pet is showing and for how long.
- REMEMBER - removal of the tick does not guarantee symptoms won't develop!!
- When transporting your pet to the clinic, DO NOT WALK THEM UP!

### How is my pet treated for toxicity?

Pets showing the above symptoms require an injection of tick antiserum to counteract the venom produced by the tick. Treatment also includes a sedative which helps lower the high blood pressure caused by the tick's venom as well as antibiotics and intravenous fluids.

Tick paralysis pets are hospitalized for a minimum of 3 days so that changes in the condition of your animal can be monitored and immediate attention given if the animal suddenly worsens. Recovery in hospital allows your pet to rest and not be excited by family activities. The time spent in hospital may be extended depending on how your pet is recovering. Once your pet shows a good ability to walk and swallow they can be sent home.

### When Your Pet Comes Home:

Keep the animal quiet and restrict exercise for two weeks or a temporary relapse may occur. Offer food and water in small amounts only for the first few days or until you are certain it can swallow properly. Monitor the animal closely so that any further ticks are found early.

If symptoms recur, contact the veterinary clinic immediately as further treatment may be necessary.

Prevention is always better than treatment so see our staff for the appropriate tick prevention for your pet. We recommend Scalibor tick collars and/or Frontline topical/spray or Advantix every 2 weeks during tick season. Remember - Advantix and tick collars are extremely toxic to cats!