

# Pest Alert

Veterinary Services

## Asian Longhorned Tick (*Haemaphysalis longicornis*)

The Asian longhorned tick (ALHT) is an invasive pest that poses a serious threat to livestock. While not normally found in the Western Hemisphere, this tick was reported for the first time in the United States in 2017. It has since been found in numerous Eastern States. ALHT can reproduce without a male, so a single tick can create a population in a new location; one female can lay up to 2,000 eggs.

### Distribution

ALHT is native to eastern China, Japan, the Russian Far East and Korea. It is an introduced and established exotic species in Australia, New Zealand and several island nations in the Western Pacific Region. In late 2017, ALHT was found in New Jersey, marking the first confirmed detection of this pest in the United States. To date, ALHT has been confirmed in the following States: Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The widespread establishment of a new tick species in the United States is rare. After the 2017 detection, animal health officials examined how and when the tick arrived in the United States. It remains unknown how the ALHT first entered the country, but it likely arrived here in or before 2010. Possible routes of entry include imports of domestic pets, horses, or livestock or people unknowingly carrying the tick back to the United States after traveling abroad.

### Hosts

ALHT has been found feeding on a number of hosts, including sheep, goats, dogs, cats, horses, cattle, chickens, black bears, foxes (red and grey), coyotes, groundhogs, striped skunks, white-tailed deer, elk, opossums, raccoons, Canada geese, barred owls, great horned owls, brown boobies, *Peromyscus* mice, and red-tailed hawks. The tick has also been found on people.

### Description

ALHT is light brown in color. The adult female grows to the size of a pea when full of blood. Male ticks are rare. Other stages of the tick are very small, about the size of a sesame seed or even smaller.



Asian longhorned tick, adult female dorsal view (James Gathany, CDC)



This tick is about the size of a sesame seed. (Michael Greenwood)

### Impact

ALHT is mainly a pest of concern in livestock. This tick often forms large infestations on one animal, causing great stress and reducing growth and production. A severe infestation can even kill the animal due to blood loss.

Disease spread is another threat. In other countries, ALHT is known to transmit the agents of several livestock and human diseases, including anaplasmosis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, theileriosis, and rickettsiosis.



In the United States, the Ikeda strain of *Theileria orientalis* (an agent of theileriosis) was recently found in ALHT collected in Virginia. Research has shown that the ALHT can give this pathogen to uninfected calves under lab conditions. ALHT can also transmit *Rickettsia rickettsii* (the agent of Rocky Mountain spotted fever) in a lab setting.

### What You Can Do

- **Treat your livestock for ticks.** Regular tick treatments should be effective against ALHT. Consult your veterinarian about which products to use.
- **Practice tick prevention** on feedlots and pastures, such as keeping grass and weeds trimmed and clearing away brush.
- **Check your livestock for ticks regularly.** If you spot any unusual-looking ticks or large infestations, report it to your State animal health official ([www.usaha.org/saho](http://www.usaha.org/saho)).
- **Safely remove ticks from people and pets as quickly as possible.** If you think you have found an ALHT, place the tick in a zip-top bag, seal it, and give it to your veterinarian for identification.

### Learn More

If you have animal health-related questions, contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) at [vs.sp.chc.all@usda.gov](mailto:vs.sp.chc.all@usda.gov).

Your county Extension office ([www.nifa.usda.gov/extension](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/extension)) is also a great resource for information.

For human health and tick information, including how to safely remove ticks from pets and people, visit [www.cdc.gov/ticks](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks).