

If your dog is attacked by ticks

LAST WEEK a reader from Burnley wrote to say his dogs had been bitten by ticks during a walking holiday in Wales and wondered how he should treat them if it happened again.

There are plenty of chemically-prepared products on the market, but these can contain toxic elements. If you use them too much they could have an adverse effect on pets with a weak immune system.

By Carol Martin
Canine Therapy Centre,
Cockenzie

So a lot of pet owners are now looking for alternative, natural products that won't do any harm.

Ticks are parasites you normally find in rural areas, where they infest livestock. It's always a good idea to check your dog over as soon as you get back to the car.

Ticks burrow their heads into the skin of your pet and feed on the blood. They usually start off fairly small, but can grow up to half an inch as they become swollen with blood.

They're bean-shaped and dark-coloured. When they're small they're easily mistaken for a skin tag, but you can see their little legs on the under part of the body.

Once they've eaten their full they usually fall off.

However their bites can easily become infected, so they're best removed as soon as you notice them. It's important to remove the whole tick, making sure the head isn't left in the animal, as this could cause infection.

There are natural tick drops available containing Tea Tree, Cedar Wood and Lavender. Just drop them directly on to the tick so it's entirely covered.

After a couple of days the tick should release its grip and you'll be able to remove it easily using a tick picker, or tweezers, which you can get from a vet.

After the tick is removed, you should spray the area or dab it with Tea Tree Oil to help prevent any infection.

You can't beat berries

DON'T YOU just love the summer when you can tuck into tasty British strawberries and raspas — and forget those tasteless Spanish and Dutch imports?

But not only are our home-grown berries delicious, they can do you the power of good, too.

However, the sad fact is that Scots simply don't eat enough of them and experts at the University of Dundee are carrying out studies to find out why.

Here's the low-down on the goodness of berries.

ATKINS DIET or South Beach? Low-fat or low-carb? Count calories or consult the Glycemic Index?

Every day we are bombarded with dietary advice from every angle.

It's no wonder people are confused about what they should be eating.

Fortunately, the one thing everyone agrees on (even the carbohydrate-fearing Dr. Atkins!) is that you should be eating berries.

It doesn't matter which are your favourites — strawberries, brambles or raspberries. Fresh or frozen. You simply can't go wrong.

Chronic diseases are reaching critical levels in Scotland. Think of berries as nature's prescription against them.

Prevent cancer

Studies suggest that active substances in berries may help prevent or delay everything from cancer, heart disease and stroke through to urinary tract infections and decline of brain function in old age.

So how do such small fruits deliver such impressive health rewards?

Antioxidants deserve most of the credit.

They're Nature's defence against the damaging effects of free radicals.

Free radicals are produced as a result of both normal metabolic processes in the body and outside factors like smoking and pollution.

They damage the body's cells and contribute to the formation of cancerous tumours.

By Jennifer Dewar
Centre for Public
Health Nutrition Research,
University of Dundee

Also, free radicals are linked to clogging of the arteries which cause heart attacks and strokes. Antioxidants essentially soak up the free radicals, neutralise their harmful effect and help protect our bodies against cancer and heart disease.

Berries contain high levels of antioxidants called polyphenols. Polyphenols such as flavonoids (which give berries their colour and flavour) have even higher antioxidant activity than better-known antioxidants Vitamins E or C.

In fact, in an analysis of foods containing antioxidants, blueberries, strawberries, brambles and raspberries all ranked in the top 10.

You may have heard about the health benefits of green tea or red wine — that's polyphenols at work, too!

As well as preventing free radical damage, studies have shown berries may provide other health benefits.

They may help enhance your immune system, de-activate harmful carcinogens and reduce inflammation, which often causes cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

Toss some blueberries on top of your cereal this morning and they may protect against

decline in brain function (such as memory loss) that occur as you get older.

Plus, the antibacterial effect of cranberries and blueberries may help guard against urinary tract infections, stomach ulcers and gum disease.

With all these potential health benefits, you'd think Scots would be tucking into punnet after punnet of delicious home-grown berries.

Sadly, not. Average consumption in Scotland is at just under 1 kg (2.2lbs) of berries per person annually. A far cry from the Finns who chomp their way through more than 6 kg (13.2 lbs) per person every year.

Poor diet

Following a long-term national initiative to promote a healthier lifestyle in Finland, heart disease and cancer levels decreased dramatically over 25 years — not bad for a country that once led the world in coronary disease.

A Finnish berry project that encouraged berry growing and consumption helped instil a berry culture and contributed to the improvement in health.

Today, Scotland has one of the worst health records in Western Europe with mortality rates from coronary heart disease and cancer at unacceptable levels.

This chronic situation is heavily influenced by lifestyle factors such as poor diet and lack of exercise.

Scottish berries are low in fat, full of fibre, loaded with vitamins and minerals, and packed with phytonutrients.

We should take advantage of this nutritional gold mine right on our doorstep.

Raspberry Almond Scones

Ingredients:
225g (8 oz) plus 2 tbsp flour (divided use)
40g (1½ oz) sugar
3 tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
40g (1½ ozs) polyunsaturated margarine
150ml milk
2 tsp vanilla extract
½ tsp almond extract
125g (4½ oz) fresh or frozen raspberries

Method:

Preheat oven to 400F/ 220C. Lightly grease a baking tray with margarine.

In a large bowl, stir together the 225g (8 oz) flour with the sugar, baking powder and salt.

Rub in the margarine until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Do not overmix.

Make a well in the centre and pour in the milk and extracts. Stir quickly to blend the wet and dry ingredients.

Toss raspberries with 1 tbsp of the remaining flour. Quickly stir into the soft dough until just combined so they don't "bleed" too much.

Place small heaps of dough on to baking tray, smoothing with a spoon if necessary. Sift remaining tbsp flour over the top.

Bake for 10 minutes or until golden brown.

Serve warm. Makes 8 scones.

● With thanks to Julie Beattie, Scientific Co-ordinator of the Berry Scotland Programme and Annie Anderson, Professor of Food Choice at the University of Dundee.



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The May 30th winner was **Margaret Gilmour of Kirkcaldy.**

DAYS; 5, 18, 2, 8, 12, 17, 30, 3, 16, 22, 9, 11, 15, 24, 13, 26, 1, 6, 10, 4, 7, 14

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Calls cost 50p per minute. Usual Sunday Post contest rules apply. The winner will be selected at random from all eligible entries received before midnight on the Wednesday following publication. Proof of birth date may be required.