

# 2022 State of the **TICK** **CONTROL** **MARKET**

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# TACKLING TICKS — A 2022 PCT Market Report

*PCT's annual survey sheds light on the state of the tick control market and how pest management professionals are marketing, selling, treating and protecting customers (and pets) from this pest.*

**B**reaking news: The weather is warming up across the country. (Well, that's not the "news.") "And with warmer weather there are more ticks — and now we have the blacklegged tick in Nebraska, which is one that carries the bacteria that causes Lyme disease," reports Carl Braun, owner of Quality Pest Control in Omaha.

This local media story triggered a slew of social media posts. "My service manager said his Facebook was blowing up with people asking about ticks," Braun says.

Demand for tick services is steadily increasing in his neck of the woods, especially among pet owners. "Now we are being more intentional about suggesting the service because we see a great opportunity to do more of it," Braun says. "It starts with education, and ticks are second only to mosquitoes as a [pest] public health concern."

Braun visited a neighboring doggy day care business to speak to the owners about tick prevention. "My wife and I are also in a dog club, so networking — it's a good way to spread the word," he says.

Tick pressure depends on the region, weather, geographic factors like wooded areas or overgrown grasses, and animal populations like deer, rodents and possums. PCT's 2022 State of the Tick Con-

trol Market report surveyed pest management professionals across the country. Twenty-six percent of respondents say tick service is a more significant part of their overall business, and 45 percent notice no change. And 41 percent rated clients' awareness of ticks as a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 (not at all aware) to 5 (very aware).

Jay Groat says news reports do trigger calls. "In upstate New York, we are getting a couple of newer ticks, and people see it on the news," says the owner of Bug Bee Gone in Delmar, N.Y. Specifically, he cites the Lone Star tick. "There is a greater awareness in general," he says.

Meanwhile, Gary Rottler's tick business was up 42 percent last year, and year to date he's seeing an increase of 36 per-

cent. "We've had a resurgence of ticks, I think, and with COVID, more people are hunkered down and staying home or spending time in their yards," says the owner of Rottler Pest Solutions in St. Louis, Mo. "Our tick business has definitely increased, and we piggyback it with our mosquito service."

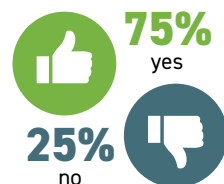
But an uptick in customer interest and pest pressure isn't across the board.

"I have seen a decline, believe it or not," says David Navarro Jr., who runs David's Pest Control in McAllen, Texas, with his father. He thinks one reason why is because more pet owners are giving their fur buddies flea/tick preventive pills. "Some take that step and forgo the professional service," he says.

From driving public awareness to marketing, sales and treatment, this PCT report provides an overview of the tick control landscape. 🌿

## WHO PERFORMS TICK CONTROL?

Does your company location offer tick control services?

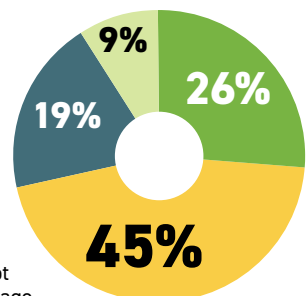


Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 198

## FIVE-YEAR TREND

In the past five years, have tick control services become a more or less significant portion of your location's business?

- more significant
- no change
- less significant
- cannot compare; not involved five years ago



Source: Readex Research; Number of respondents: 149



# CURBING CALLBACKS

**R**ain, rain go away could be the spring tick control chant. While residual applications can withstand weather, a washout will impact efficacy, and pest management professionals (PMPs) need to be prepared. “You get those rainy seasons and [the product] might not take as you like, so we might use granular and other options,” says Adam Carace, CEO, Pest-End Exterminators, Plaistow, N.H.

If a customer calls back and requests a re-service, “We pivot in our treatment,” Carace says.

Callbacks are uncommon, and to prevent them technicians make inter-

nal notes if rain occurs immediately following a tick treatment. “We follow up with those customers, and we cover them for the season, so if they need a fourth or fifth service, that is included,” Carace says.

If rain puts a damper on an application, Quality Pest Control in Omaha, Neb., immediately re-services the next day. “For us, callbacks haven’t been an issue,” says Carl Braun, president.

The typical callback rate for tick service is 1 to 2 percent, and 44 percent of PCT tick control survey respondents said they get none. Braun says, “Usually, we bundle tick with mosquito service, and I can’t recall a callback just for ticks.” 🌿

## ABOUT THE SURVEY

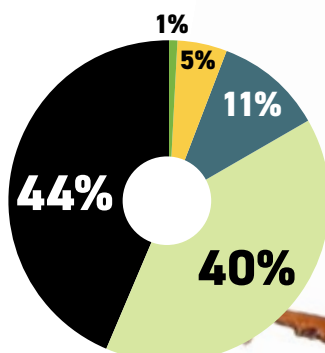
The PCT 2022 State of the Tick Control Market survey was sponsored by Central Life Sciences/Zoëcon and compiled by Readex Research, a privately held research firm in Stillwater, Minn.

A sample of 4,443 pest control company owners, operators, executives and technical directors was systematically selected from the PCT database. Data was collected from 198 respondents — a 4 percent response rate — via online survey from March 10-24. The margin of error for percentages is plus or minus 7.9 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Charts may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

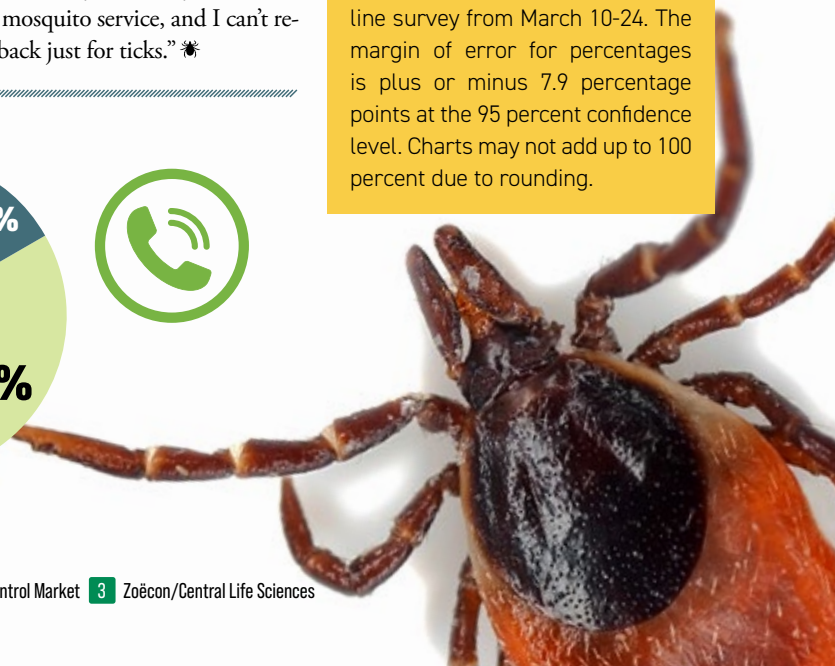
## TYPICAL CALLBACK RATE

What is your location's typical callback rate for tick jobs?

- 10-30%+
- 5-9%
- 3-4%
- 1-2%
- no callbacks



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 149







# Is the **PRESSURE ON?**

**W**hat's driving tick pressure in some areas of the country — and promoting a decline in other regions? There's more than one answer. Gary Rottler says housing development in the St. Louis, Mo., area could factor into homeowners' heightened interest in tick service. Deer and other wildlife that once lived in the wooded areas that are stripped for construction don't necessarily "move" away. "They still want to hang around, but your backyard is their backyard," says the owner of Rottler Pest Solutions. Those animals can attract ticks.

Steve Gurin agrees that quality time at home amid COVID triggered calls for all services, including tick treatments. "And another big thing — COVID pets," says the owner of Mosquito Hunters in Manhasset, N.Y. "There are a larger percentage of people who have pets now, and the demand for tick services rises because of that."

In fact, Gurin says he started treating his own property for ticks after brushing

his dog's coat and finding a tick on his back.

Incidences of Lyme disease in New Hampshire and Massachusetts along Jay Groat's service routes is prompting demand for the service. "Everyone looks at it as a health issue, and there is an increased attitude toward ticks," says the owner of Bug Bee Gone in Delmar, N.Y. He has been in business for 15 years and working in the industry for 30. Overall, he notices more interest in tick control. "People find out someone they know gets Lyme disease, so they want a preventive service," he says.

On the other hand, Adam Carace is expecting a lighter tick season compared to years past. "In our area, we did not have a lot of snow, and snow helps insulate the ticks so they can survive the winter," says the CEO of Pest-End Exterminators in Plaistow, N.H. "It was very cold without a lot of snow, which can help kill off some of the population."

Also, there were fewer rodent calls during winter. "The rodent population

typically helps the tick population," he says.

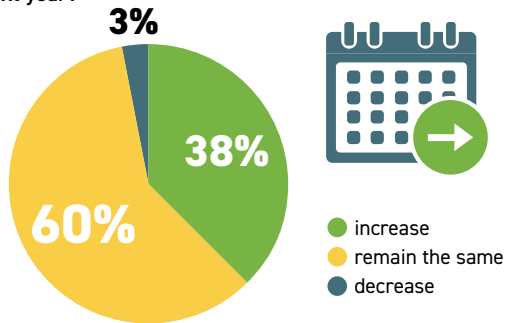
But then again, "We'll see," Carace says. Early spring weeks will dictate an uptick or decline in tick pressure. Still, he's getting more calls for service than five years ago. "People were coming down with Lyme disease in our area, and when that started happening, it pushed this [service] forward even more so than mosquito because it was impacting people and their families."

Only 3 percent of respondents to PCT's tick control survey said they expect a decrease in revenue generated by tick prevention services, and 60 percent estimate revenues will stay the same. Meanwhile, 38 percent say tick control will likely represent a larger portion of their bottom line.

The survey found that 93 percent of service revenue is generated from residential accounts. Rottler says, "Our primary customer are folks who are enjoying their backyards, whether they have a pool, playground or patio, and they want it to be pest free." \*

### SAME SERVICES, DIFFERENT YEAR

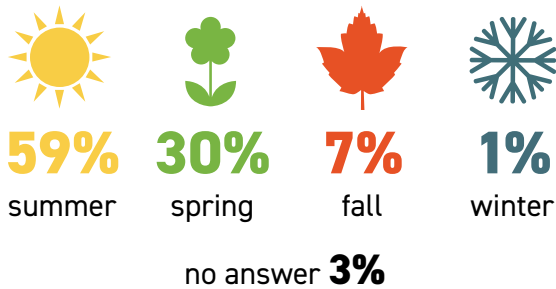
How do you expect the percentage of revenue generated by your location's tick control services to change in the next year?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 149

### SUMMER IS BUSIEST

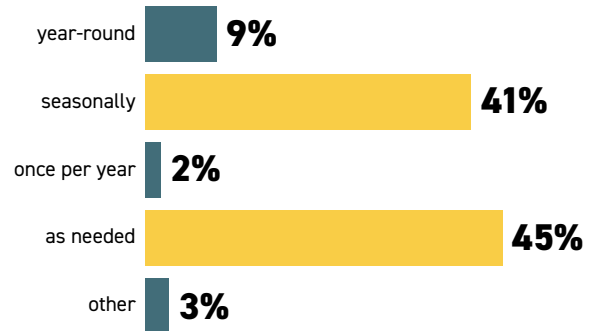
What season represents the largest share of your location's tick business?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 149

### TICK TOCK

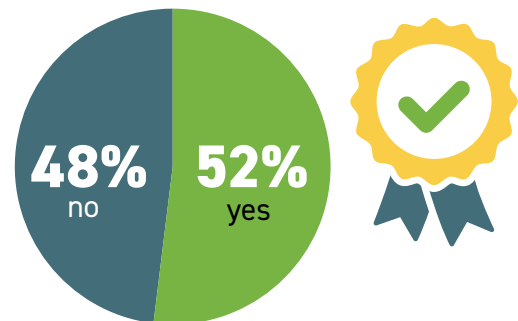
How often does your location provide tick control services to its typical client?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 149

### HALF OFFER GUARANTEE

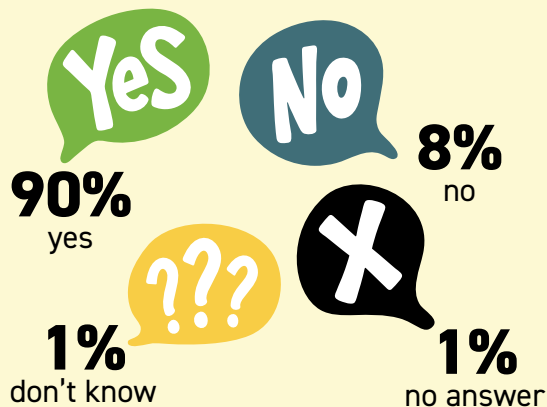
Does your location offer a tick control guarantee?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 149

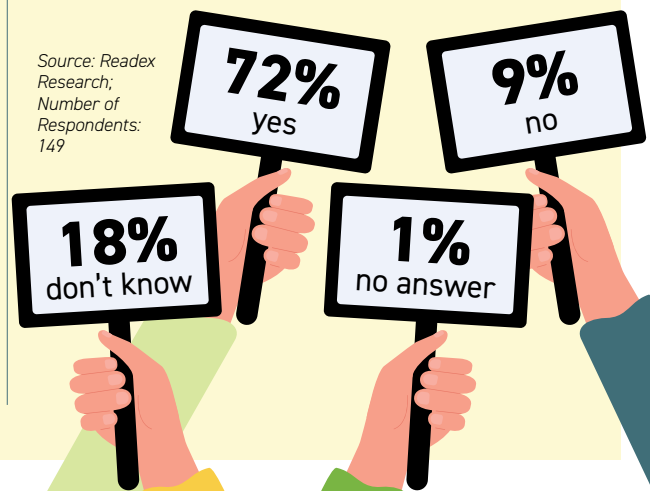
## PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT: YOU VS. THEM

Do you consider ticks a public health threat?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 149

Do your customers consider ticks a public health threat?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 149

# UNDERSTANDING THE RISE IN TICK POPULATIONS

Tick encounters are growing. With an increase in ticks comes an increase in tick-borne diseases affecting both people and animals. Tick-borne disease cases have more than doubled in the U.S. in the past twenty years. Despite efforts to stop this trend, tick populations have continued to rise.



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## Why Tick Populations Are Growing

Several factors play a role in the steady increase of these disease-carrying arachnids across the U.S., from climate change to urbanization. These factors present unique challenges for control efforts. Public awareness and exposure to ticks has also ticked up as people spend more time outdoors, especially in wooded areas where wildlife are abundant.

Climate change is a critical driver in the growth and spread of tick populations. Some tick species can only reproduce if the temperature is over 45 degrees Fahrenheit. And with winters getting warmer, tick eggs are able to hatch earlier, extending tick season.

Animal conservation efforts also impact tick populations. Less hunting leads to more animals such as deer roaming around in colder months, giving ticks more consistent hosts to latch onto during the fall and winter. Reforestation and urbanization play a role too. As ticks are displaced from their natural habitats, they migrate to grassy areas, such as public parks or yards.



## How Ticks Threaten Humans and Animals

While ticks may be small in stature, they pose a big threat. Ticks spread several diseases, including Lyme Disease, Babesiosis and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever across the U.S.A. A new tick-borne disease has emerged - the Heartland virus, which can cause symptoms such as fever, fatigue and decreased appetite. The virus can also affect blood counts and liver function, potentially leading to hospitalization. Greater awareness on how to identify and prevent tick-borne diseases from invading public spaces, backyards and homes must be brought to the forefront.



## How to ID and Stop Ticks in Their Tracks

Keeping an eye out for ticks is critical for prevention. Ticks hide in small spaces such as hairlines, backs of knees and under arms. While there are several species of ticks, they have some similar characteristics, such as small round bodies and eight legs.

Ticks that have attached to a host can be seen on the outside of the skin. Tick bites are initially painless, so checking yourself and pets is a necessary step in preventing tick-borne disease. Symptoms will start to show in a few days if the tick was carrying a disease.

As for pets, ticks tend to target areas in and around the ears, around the eyelids, under collars and front legs, between back legs and toes and around the tail. They can be identified by running fingers through the pet's fur and feeling for any small bumps.



*With tick populations on the rise, effective and widespread control is needed now, more than ever, to stop the threats they bring to communities. Zoëcon offers products that can help protect people and animals from harmful ticks. Lambda 9.7 CS insecticide, ExciteR™ insecticide, and Essentria® IC-3 insecticide can be sprayed directly onto lawns to curb tick populations. Products like these are vital for protecting homes and communities from tick-borne diseases.*





# Treatment & Prevention

**T**ried-and-true residual liquid treatments are a gold standard for tick treatment, and mosquito prevention for that matter. Many pest management professionals bundle the services. Rottler Pest Solutions in St. Louis, Mo., sells an outdoor program — a monthly service from April to October that includes tick and mosquito prevention.

“It’s always a bundle, because the products are similar,” says Gary Rottler, owner.

Rottler uses an adulticide and insect growth regulator. “Ticks are generally on shrubs, trees and vegetation where we also find mosquitoes,” he says. “So, we look at the same criteria for treating both.”

Mosquitoes like standing water, while ticks fester in lower-lying brush, tall grasses and along wood lines. Look up for mosquitoes (treating 12 feet) and down for ticks (3 feet), says Adam Carace, CEO, Pest-End Exterminators, Plaistow, N.H.

In the PCT survey, 28 percent of respondents offer tick control that includes mosquitoes and/or fleas.

“We treat where there is leaf litter from fall and winter because ticks love to get into that and overwinter,” Carace says.

“The same is true with mulch beds or rock bed areas, along with shrub areas.”

The service is sold as tick-only or in combination with mosquito treatment. Customers can also opt for mosquito prevention a la carte. Tick service is three times per year, generally in April, July and September-October based on tick biology.

Generally, Carace relies on liquid spray applications, but he pivots during rainy periods. “We might use granular as another option if we have a rainy April, and that definitely happens in our area,” he says.

A three-step preventive approach helps keep ticks at bay for Mosquito Hunters in Manhasset, N.Y. For properties without pets, Steve Gurin, president, will set out tick tubes. The biodegradable tubes look like empty paper towel rolls and hold treated cotton. “Mice take the cotton with permethrin and line their nests with it,” he explains. “That product on the cotton makes it so ticks that bite the mice die.”

Dogs can take interest in the tubes, which is why Gurin uses this treatment addition on pet-free sites. He combines it with a pyrethroid residual spray — the same product the company uses for mosquito control. Customers can purchase





a nine-pack mosquito service with a tick upgrade that includes three treatments.

The third aspect of minimizing ticks is maintenance. “My best advice for clients is to maintain their yards,” Gurin says. He suggests placing children’s play sets away from heavily shaded, wooded areas — and the same goes for outdoor furniture. “Remove leaf debris, because they like to breed and hide in it, and clear tall grass or bushes,” he adds.

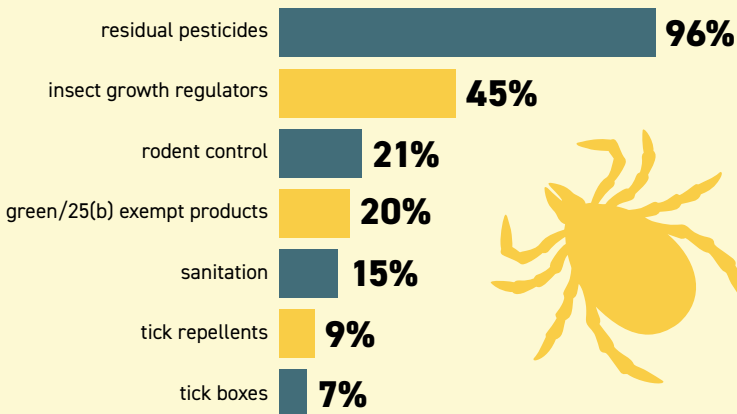
Another suggestion for clients: Lay a 3-foot-wide barrier of gravel or wood chips between heavily wooded areas and the yard. “It significantly prevents ticks from coming into your yard,” Gurin says. “That’s a far distance for a tick to travel in gravel or wood chips, which they do not do well in.”

Controlling wildlife is also part of preventing ticks from making a home in clients’ yards. “We’ve had instances where possums are living under a porch or deck and there are heavy flea and tick infestations related to that, so then we promote exclusion,” Rottler says. 🦡



### TOTAL TREATMENT PACKAGE

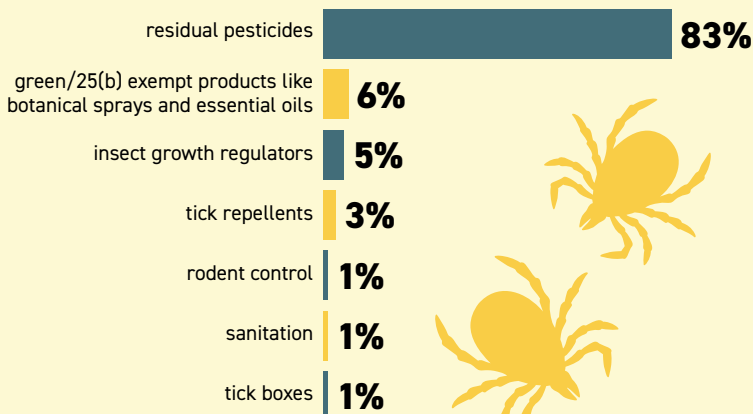
Which of the following control measures are used by your location to manage ticks?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 149 (Respondents could select more than one answer)

### PRIMARY CONTROL MEASURES

What is your location’s *primary* control measure for managing ticks?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 149

### Q: Aside from Lyme disease, what are other tick-borne diseases?

- Rocky Mountain spotted fever
- Anaplasmosis
- Babesiosis
- Colorado tick fever
- Powassan encephalitis
- Tularemia
- Ehrlichiosis
- Relapsing fever





# Tack-On Ticks to Your Service

**M**ay was Lyme Disease Awareness month, and Steve Gurin let customers know with an email campaign to promote tick prevention services. “We got a lot of good response,” he says of Mosquito Hunters’ marketing and educational effort. “We provided information about different diseases ticks can carry and spread that affect pets, humans, everybody.”

Pet owners are “definitely” most interested in the service, says Gurin, who owns the Manhasset, N.Y.-based location. “They are more conscientious about ticks and want to take more precautions,” he says, adding that the topic can crop up during a veterinarian appointment when flea/tick preventive pills are advised. Treating the outdoor spaces where pets romp around — particularly along wood lines, shrubbery and tall grasses — is extra insurance for four-legged loved ones.

At Quality Pest Control, ticks work into conversations about general pest control and preventing disease. “It starts with educating our customers who call,” says Carl Braun, president of the Omaha, Neb.-based business. “If you know the show ‘Columbo,’ you’ve seen how star Peter Falk starts to walk away

and turns around, ‘Oh, by the way.’ That has been our approach to selling tick services,” he says. “But now, we are being way more intentional about it.”

David Navarro Jr. and Jay Groat are part of the camp that relies on word-of-mouth to “market” services, which is also perhaps the case for 30 percent of PCT Tick Control survey respondents. “It’s mostly pet owners who reach out,” says Navarro, manager at David’s Pest Control in McAllen, Texas. “In our region, we are blessed in abundance with pests, so there is never a dull moment and we have our work cut out for us.”

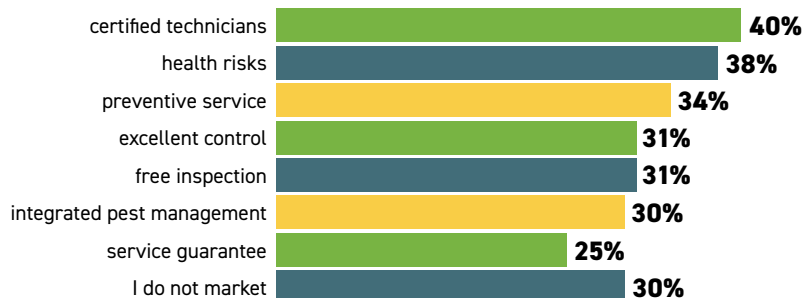
Groat says repeat customers pass the

word that his company, Bug Bee Gone, offers tick control. And he picks up customers from the app Nextdoor, where residents around his office in Delmar, N.Y., post questions and referrals. He’ll sell a one-time, seasonal or bundled service. “I actually do not give people contracts, and I think they appreciate that,” he says.

Regular email blasts with “did you know?” insights and reminders promote the service at Pest-End Exterminators, says Adam Carace, CEO of the Plaistow, N.H., business. He says, “There is not a lot of cost in getting those customers, because they see [the information] and come to you.” ✨

## CREATURE FEATURES: PROMOTING TICK SERVICES

What aspects of tick control service do PMPs highlight in marketing efforts?



Source: Readex Research; Respondents: 149 (multiple answers)



# You Need to See it to **BELIEVE IT**



“**L**ast year was an awful tick season,” says Adam Carace, CEO, Pest-End Exterminators, Plaistow, N.H. “Ticks for the most part are relatively easy to control, and we rarely have callbacks. But last year was tick apocalypse.”

A customer called and said, “I don’t know what to do. My screen door is covered in ticks,” he says.

Carace at first wondered if this was a high-drama case. Really? “Can you send us a pic?” he asked the client.

Sure enough, hundreds of ticks slathered on the screen door looked like they were begging to get in. “We had no idea why,” Carace relates. “We were shocked.”

A one-time treatment knocked down the ticks, and the customer never had the issue again. “We joked that the only thing we could think of is that a bear or moose rubbed itself against the screen and all the ticks fell off,” he said.

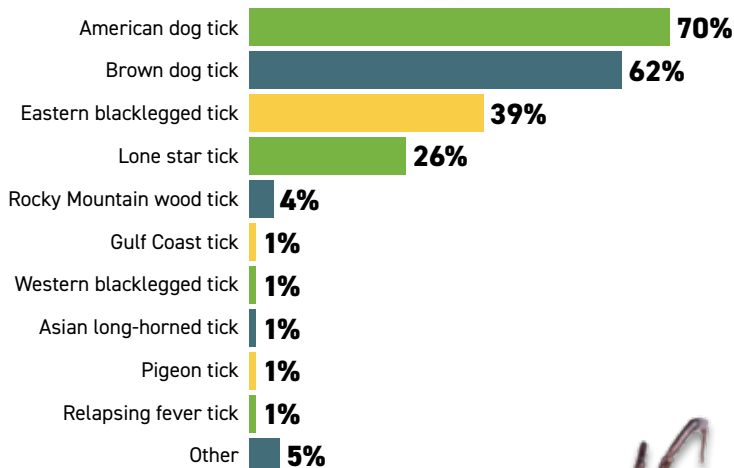
A couple times every tick season, Gary Rottler runs into a “side” case. “We will treat the side of the house, and then walk around to the other side and see a hundred of them and it’s like, ‘What is going on here?’ We flush them out and then the side is black because it’s covered with ticks,” says the owner of Rottler Pest Solutions, St. Louis, Mo.

On a personal note, Rottler and his wife were watching their grandchildren and dog when they ran into their own tick issue. “The dog is on a flea and tick program, and I’m not sure if the juice wore off, but they jumped into bed and we saw a big tick on her the size of a dime,” he said.

Next steps: strip the sheets, triple-check the dog and a late bedtime. 🦋

## ON THE RADAR: TICK SPECIES SPOTTED

What species of ticks have you encountered in your service area?



Source: Readex Research; Number of Respondents: 149 (Respondents could select multiple answers)

### Q: WHICH TICKS CARRY THE BACTERIA THAT CAUSES LYME DISEASE?

**A:** The blacklegged tick and Western blacklegged tick, also known as “deer ticks,” can cause Lyme disease.





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