



**Bright Eyes & Bushy Tails
Housecall Veterinary Service**

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Dear Animal Shelter raffle participant,

On July 15-16, Bright Eyes & Bushy Tails Veterinary Clinic sponsored a raffle at the Iowa City/Coralville Animal Shelter. Thank you for participating! “How many eggs does a female tick lay” was our version of “how many jellybeans are in the jar.” We pledged a donation to the Animal Shelter of 50 cents per entry, and 128 people entered the raffle.

The tick in question was removed from an Australian Shepherd. The tick was a *Dermatophalus* species (“Wood Tick”), which are known for being large and having a pattern on their backs (called an “ornamented scute”). Wood Ticks can carry some diseases, but not Lyme Disease (Lyme is carried by Ixodid species “Deer Ticks”).

After the tick was removed from the dog, Dr. Jennifer Berger placed it in the ziplock bag. It took a few weeks before it laid its eggs, and the eggs hatched in about a month. The normal life cycle of a tick is very dependent on temperature and humidity. Ticks only lay eggs once, and then they die. We suppose our tick was happy in the bag; it laid its eggs pretty quickly, and 100% of the eggs hatched. Some ticks have been reported to live for over 20 years, waiting for suitable blood meals so they can lay their eggs.

Eggs hatch into larval ticks, and larvae grow to nymphs which turn into adults. Growing requires a blood meal at each stage. The ticks in the bag were in the larval stage, since they never got their first blood meal.

Never underestimate the value of experience. It was my (Dr. Allan Berger’s) job to count the ticks, and I’m embarrassed to say I don’t think he did the best job possible. I learned a lot in the process though, and if I ever need to count ticks again, my technique will be much more accurate. Specific problems encountered include: the Ziplock® bag cracked in the freezer, ticks stick together, ticks float in water (even with detergent added). In order to collect the ticks, I had to wash them in alcohol, centrifuge them, and dry them. I lost an estimated 10% during this process, mostly from the crack in the Ziplock® bag (I’ll use Glad next time). But once the ticks were clean and dry, I was able to manipulate them pretty well with a small paintbrush to weigh and count.