

 **BUGGED OUT!**
The World's Most Dangerous Bugs 

TERRIFYING TICKS



by Kevin Blake

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A Black Speck

On a cool April morning in 2015, Jane Ashley started off on a hike near her Virginia home. With her dog Daisy by her side, Jane walked through fields of tall golden grass. The next day, Jane's daughter, Emma, spotted a black speck on her mom's back. Looking closer, Emma noticed that it wasn't a spot at all, but a tiny creature with eight legs. It was a tick! Emma quickly yanked it off.



Jane Ashley



Ticks often live in tall grass or on bushes or shrubs. They can also be found in lawns and gardens.

Days later, Jane began feeling very sick. She had developed a rash, felt achy all over, and experienced stabbing pain behind her eyes. Jane's pounding headache soon turned into a high fever. When she felt so ill she was unable to get out of bed, Jane decided to check herself into the hospital. What was making her so horribly sick?



Ticks are **arachnids**, like spiders and scorpions. They have eight short legs and oval-shaped bodies.

From a distance, a tick can look like a dark speck or a poppy seed. Ticks can often be found on very soft parts of a person's body, such as the armpits and inner thighs.

Mystery Illness

When Jane was in the hospital, her condition quickly grew worse. Her lungs filled with fluid, which made breathing difficult. Other **organs** also began to fail. Jane grew sicker by the hour. Because of the tick bite and rash, one doctor **suspected** that Jane had come down with Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF). This deadly disease is spread by ticks. Luckily for Jane, he was right.

Jane in the hospital



RMSF often causes a rash, along with a fever, headache, and stomachache.

The doctor treated Jane with **antibiotics**. Slowly, she began to recover. Within a couple of weeks, Jane was back on her feet, though she was still feeling weak. As Jane left the hospital, she was tired but very grateful for, “the medical folks who helped me survive my illness.” Now, Jane walks her dog Daisy in the park—and always checks herself and her pet for ticks afterward.



RMSF is often **transmitted** by the American dog tick, which is found mostly in the southeastern United States. RMSF is the most common **fatal tick-borne** disease in the country, causing about 15 deaths a year.

Certain kinds of ticks prefer to feed on certain kinds of animals. The American dog tick, for example, likes to prey on dogs.