

ORCHARD HILLS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

Fleas, ticks and mites

Fleas, ticks and mites are **ectoparasites**, parasites that live on or burrow into their hosts' skin. **Parasites** live at least part of their life cycles at the expense of host organisms. They can cause blood loss, skin irritation, allergies, and disease.

Some parasites live continuously on a single host, and others live intermittently on their host. Many parasites spend as little as 10% of their life actually feeding (i.e., living) on a host. Some live on different host species at different stages of their life cycle (e.g., ticks that carry Lyme disease live on white-footed mice as larvae, and on deer or other mammals as adults). Some can live on various host species, and others are restricted to a specific host species, often to a single area of the host's body. For example, demodectic mange is caused by a hair follicle mite and is usually found only on the head or legs.

Hosts provide a number of essential resources for parasites, such as:

- **Food** (sweat, blood, tears)
- A warm, moist, protected **environment**
- **Transportation and transmission** to another host (some parasites' life cycles require several hosts)