

# PREVENTING FLEAS & TICKS

## FLEAS

Fleas are among the most common health problems of dogs and cats. Here in Wisconsin we see them sporadically - your pets may have lots of fleas one year and you may never see them the next year.

If you've never been lucky enough to see a flea, they are about 1/8 inch long, reddish brown and shaped like a sesame seed with legs. They are usually found on your pet's head, belly or lower back. If you ripple the hair backwards and look at the skin they can be seen scurrying through the base of the haircoat. The droppings they leave behind can

be seen in clusters. They look like grains of pepper. If you place some of these on white paper toweling, wet it and mush it around it will turn the toweling red.

This is because flea droppings contain digested blood. Plain dirt stays black or gray when wet.

In the long run, it is much easier and more cost-effective to prevent fleas on your pets than to have to treat a major infestation of fleas in your house. Regular use of flea preventives will take care of the occasional flea your pets may encounter in the yard and should prevent you from having to spend large sums of money on foggers and exterminators. Treating a bad flea infestation in your house is expensive.

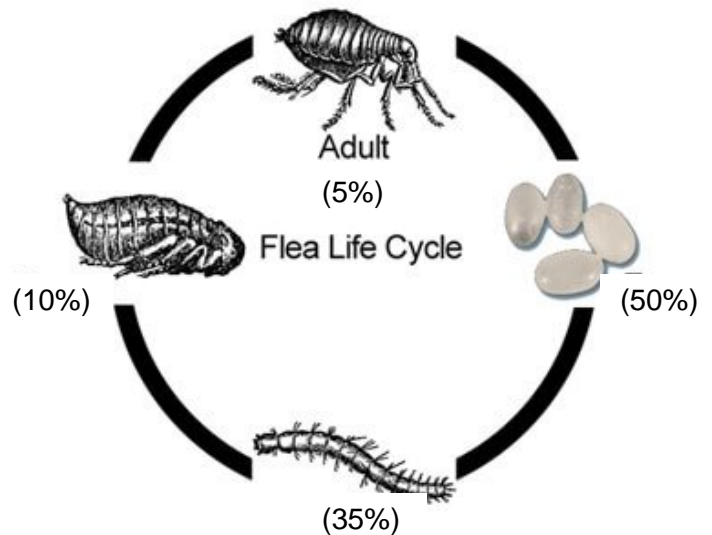
Fleas will bite your pets, causing an itchy allergic reaction which can become quite severe. They carry viral and bacterial diseases. In small animals, especially puppies and kittens, the anemia they cause from feeding on the animal's blood can be fatal. They also carry tapeworms. Tapeworm segments in the stool or around the rectal area look like small grains of rice. If your dog or cat has fleas, chances are good he has tapeworms - and vice versa.

Wildlife, as well as other cats and dogs, bring fleas into your yard. Pets and people can then bring the fleas into the house. Birds nesting in the attic or mice seeking shelter can also bring fleas into your home.

Fleas also travel on their own, as much as a mile an hour. They will hop inside through an open door or window and are often small enough to come through a window screen. Once inside your home there is no place a flea cannot get to. Adult fleas spend most of their time on your pet, but they leave slippery little eggs everywhere your pet goes - thousands of them!

## TICKS

Most flea products kill or repel ticks but ticks are tougher than fleas. They require higher levels of insecticides to kill them, so flea products sometimes have to be applied more often to control ticks. We also have oral flea and tick preventives.



Only 5% of the fleas in your house are adults; the rest are other stages that you can't see.



**Nexgard™** is made by Merial, the company that also makes Heartgard and Frontline. You can give it to your dog on the same day you give your monthly heartworm medication each month.

**Topical flea and tick preventatives:** The most well-known topical flea & tick product is Frontline Plus. Frontline has been around for a long time now. It kills ticks more quickly than the new oral products, usually before they bite. If you don't like to see any ticks on your dog, Frontline would be the product you'll want to use. (However, deer ticks are so tiny that we often never see them at all anyway.) It also doesn't seem to work as well as it did in the past. We have had a lot of clients complaining over the last couple years that when they go up north, where there are a lot of ticks, it doesn't control them sufficiently. We have upgraded to a newer veterinary-only product called **Frontline Gold™**, which has an added ingredient to make it more effective on fleas, with a better and faster flea kill.

There is a lot of counterfeit Frontline on the market and it also is heat sensitive and can be damaged during shipping, making it ineffective by the time you put it on your dog. We do not recommend buying Frontline on-line or from a big box store for this reason. Be careful where you get it from and store and apply it properly, or you may be wasting your money. Remember that we get our product directly from the manufacturer and our rebates and free product deals often make purchasing from us just as good a deal as getting it elsewhere for less per tube. Plus if you buy Frontline Gold from us, it's guaranteed.

Revolution™ is a great product, a topical that is a heartworm and roundworm preventive as well as a flea and tick insecticide. It's especially useful for cats who go outdoors and dogs with food allergies who can't take oral chewable heartworm medication. It also kills Sarcoptic mites in dogs and cats and Cheyletiella mites in cats.

**Over-the-counter products:** There are many over-the-counter flea and tick products on the market. Many contain pyrethrin or permethrin, or a synthetic chemical in that same family of compounds. These chemicals were developed in the 1970's. They are much more toxic than modern products, especially to cats, and many insects are now resistant to them. Both safety and efficacy can be poor compared to Frontline and the new oral medications. If you have no cats in your household and your pet is healthy, using these products is reasonable, although they wouldn't be our first choice.

Regular Frontline is available OTC, as are some knock-off generics. See notes about counterfeit products above.

If you want a flea and tick collar, **Seresto™** would be our first choice. It's a safe product that is waterproof and lasts 8 months. It's available at our on-line store. Flea collars in general do not provide whole-body protection as well as an ointment or an oral medication.

As always, please ask if you have any questions or concerns about any of our products or services!

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