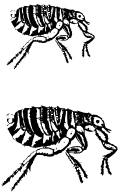


Preventing Fleas & Ticks



FLEAS

Fleas are among the most common health problems of dogs and cats. 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 products 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 usually costs upwards of \$150.

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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 the remainder of the time they are roaming your house and laying eggs - thousands of them!

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.



Prevention

Fleas can usually be prevented by treating all pets who go outdoors so they don't bring reproducing fleas into the house. If you had fleas in previous years it is wise to spray some insecticide in the house as well, especially on the ground floor near doors and windows. This will kill the occasional flea that hops in on its own.

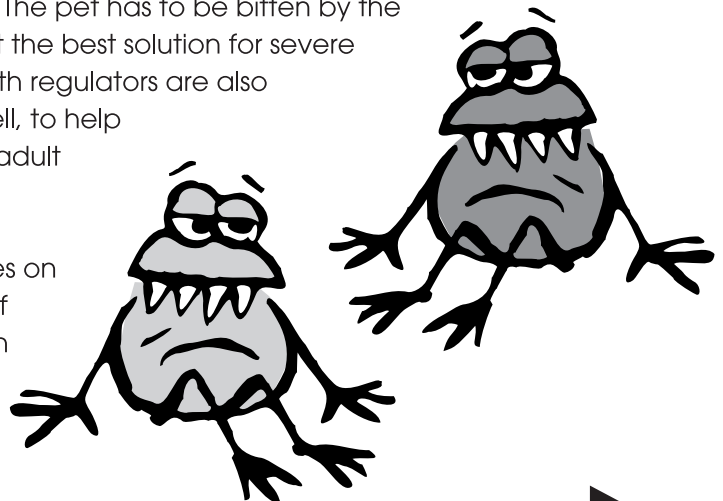
Many flea products sold in grocery and discount stores are wasting your time and money. Some are even harmful to pets. Most compounds strong enough to be effective are sold only through licensed veterinarians and exterminators, who are properly trained in their use, and are regulated by the state and the EPA. Insecticides should be used only according to label directions. Care is needed to ensure that toxicity does not develop due to the concurrent use of other drugs, pesticides or chemicals, or because the compound used was not safe for a particular age or type of animal.

New products are available that are water proof, for dogs who swim or are outdoors in the rain. Modern polymers enable them to be effective for as long as 60 days. Ointments are a good choice for dogs and cats: the contents of one or two small tubes, depending on the size of the pet, are applied to a small area of skin and it spreads over the whole pet by itself and lasts one to three months, depending on the product. Some heartworm medications also prevent fleas and come in once a month tablets or ointment.

Many store-bought insecticidal flea collars are generally not very effective and often cause dermatitis on the pet's neck. Flea shampoos and soaps are great for cleaning a dog or cat with fleas but they have no residual effect. They only kill fleas present on the pet at the time the bath is given. As soon as the animal dries off, fleas will hop right back on. For long term control you need a spray, dip, powder, mousse, pill, collar or ointment. Ointments and once a month pills are the most convenient choices for most people.

New Products on the Market

There are some new products on the market which are changing the way we deal with fleas. These products are called growth regulators. They don't kill adult fleas but they break the life cycle by preventing flea eggs from hatching. The pet has to be bitten by the flea for these products to work so they are not the best solution for severe flea problems or pets with flea allergies. Growth regulators are also present in the house sprays and foggers we sell, to help break the fleas' life cycle as well as killing the adult fleas. They are also present in Frontline Plus™ ointment and Sentinel™ heartworm and flea tablets. There are also some newer insecticides on the market to kill adult fleas and ticks. Some of these are much safer and more effective than products we've had in the past. Ask us!



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 usually have to be applied more often to control ticks. For instance, Frontline Plus™ ointment will kill fleas for 8 weeks after it is applied but it will only kill ticks for 4 weeks. Frontline is waterproof and very non-toxic.

The easiest, longest lasting tick control is a product called the Preventic© collar. The Preventic© collar contains a different chemical than the ones in standard flea products, and it only kills ticks - it won't work at all against fleas. (It is compatible for use along with other flea control products, however.) Unlike most collars, the active ingredient is in a form that spreads over your entire dog in the oils on his skin within 48 hours of applying the collar. It doesn't repel ticks but it keeps them from attaching and kills them slowly in about 24 hours. The collar lasts about 4 months. It's not a good choice for dogs that swim or those on certain medications, but we highly recommend these collars for outdoor or hunting dogs with high tick exposure.

If you are considering beginning a flea or tick control program for your pets, please consult with us. There are so many products on the market nowadays that it's tough to decide which ones are right for you. We are more than happy to help!



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