

FLEA AND TICK CONTROL

FACTS ABOUT FLEAS

Nobody wants to believe that their pet may have parasites. For many of us, our pets are family members, and we associate parasites on them with being dirty. This is not true. Did you know that a flea can jump 150 times its own length? To get rid of fleas you must take a comprehensive approach. This means that you must treat the pet, the home, and the outdoor environment all at the same time, or you will not break the life cycle of the flea.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

A flea starts out as an egg. Two breeding fleas will produce up to 600 offspring in just 30 days!! Most of the eggs are laid on the pet, with some falling off in and around your home. These eggs will hatch in 2-12 days into larvae, and then eventually spin a cocoon called the pupa. At this stage they are visible only with a microscope and relatively resistant to insecticides. They can remain in this stage for up to 20 months, and then, when the time is right, they hatch into immature adults and start the cycle all over again. However, they can go through the entire process in as 3 weeks. The adult flea can live as long as 12 months, but they need to feed regularly on food. Not all pets infested with fleas will have problems. While some pets are allergic, and on flea bite will have them in a scratching frenzy!

PREVENTION

Regardless of what claims are made by various companies, currently there is no universal fleas repellent that is 100% effective. The best way to prevent fleas is to keep all of your pets in a flea free environment. Once you have fleas, however, your treatment must be comprehensive and please remember that there is no quick fix. I urge you to discuss this with your vet and choose a preventative program that will work the best for you. Your vet is the person who is most qualified to assist you with the many choices that are out there and the vet is going to be up-to-date with latest products out on the market. There are many great products to choose from. Some of the newest and most effective are “program” the pill that prevents the fleas who bite the pet from reproducing. However, this does not prevent the flea from entering your home on your pet, and infesting the house. These fleas can still feed on humans in the house and there is a potential that any fleas feeding you, not your pet, can still reproduce. There is also “Advantage” a topical drop that is used monthly after the bath which is in wide use in the warmer climates where there is never a let-up in the flea cycle. This topical drop is placed directly on the pet’s skin and quickly penetrates into the fur. When a flea bites, it dies. There are flea collars that have been out there for a while, and they may work well for a small dog but not usually recommended for flea control on larger dogs. There are also flea sprays and powders. One of the best powders to use is “Sevin” powder which can be used directly on the pet, the yard or in the home. Avoid using insect repellents containing “deet” as these can lead to poisoning. The best resource to rely on is the recommendation of your vet.

FLEA CONTROL

To effectively control fleas, you must first understand what it takes to interfere with the flea life cycle. Your goal is to get the fleas off your pet, out of your house, off of your property and then to keep it that way!! Flea baths,, sprays and powders, and frequent vacuuming all help but on their own none of these will solve the problem. #1 treat the pet: not finding evidence of fleas does not mean that they are not causing problems. It is a sad but true fact that for every flea you see on your pet, there are 100—300 fleas in the immediate environment. All pets in the home should be bathed in a good, professional quality flea shampoo to remove dirt and fleas. This will kill the fleas on the pet but will not repel the fleas after the bath. You will need to use the flea repellent on the pet that was recommended to you by the vet. DO NOT rely on flea shampoo alone to control the problem.

IN-HOME FLEA CONTROL

Your goal should be to not only kill the adult fleas, but to interfere with the life cycle. This is by all means the most important step for total flea control. Vacuuming should be done very well as a first step and then not repeated for 7—10 day to avoid removing the insecticide. Add some “sevin” powder or other such product to the vacuum bag beforehand, as this will go a long way to prevent the eggs and larvae from hatching in the bag later. Apply a commercial insecticide all around to kill the adult fleas. A “pyrethrin” based product is safest. Be sure to wear appropriate face wear to avoid inhaling any such substances. Be sure

to follow all directions about how long you and your pet should be out of the house while the insecticide is being applied. Another alternative is to hire a commercial pest control company to treat your home.

OUTDOOR FLEA CONTROL

Only certain insecticides are licensed for outdoor use. (sevin powder is). Most products need to be applied once or twice at 10 day intervals. A good strategy is to alternate products, since fleas will develop a resistance to a single product.

Hope this information is helpful in making decisions about how to keep your pet from suffering from the effects of flea infestation. As always, it is important to consult your veterinarian when making these decisions. He/she knows what is best for the health of your pet and also is most up-to-date on the products available to you.