Fleas, Ticks and Pets
The Battle Against Parasites

Learn how to protect your pet, yourself, and your home.

The risk of collecting fleas and ticks goes along with the responsibility of living with pets. But parasites don’t have to threaten you or your pet if you take precautions. With total environmental prevention as your most valuable defense, this year’s battle against parasites is practically over.

CAUTION!!
Consult with your veterinarian before using ANY insecticide, natural or man-made, on or around your pet.

Be a label-reader - many products warn that they should not be used on cats and/or young pets, or outline other conditions. Your veterinarian is familiar with your pet’s individual sensitivities and needs. He or she can help you decide which flea-fighting products are safest for your situation.

Identify the enemy

How will you know when Rascal is being attacked by these parasites? Keep a sharp lookout for the signs of trouble so you can begin treatment as soon as possible. An early start will make your efforts more effective and relieve your pet more quickly.

Ticks are red-brown to gray, about 1/8" long, and flat (imagine a small watermelon seed). Ticks become bloated as they feed, fade to pale gray, and can triple in size.

Transmission: Pets can gather ticks from other animals or almost anywhere outdoors (ticks can also lay eggs indoors). Heavy underbrush is a favorite breeding ground, and some trees act as "day-care" centers for young ticks which then drop to the ground in large numbers.

Signs: Some ticks are too tiny to see, but most are easily visible... if you look for them. Make a habit of checking Rascal for ticks, especially in favorite hiding places: between toes, inside and behind ear flaps, under the tail. If Rascal has a heavy coat, comb the hair backwards and look at the skin all over the body. Check your pet all year in warmer regions, especially after outings in fields or heavily wooded areas.

To remove a tick: Grasp the tick with tweezers, close to your pet’s skin. Pull upward firmly (to assure removal of the entire tick) and drop it into rubbing alcohol. Apply antiseptic to the bite. Wear gloves, especially if you have any open wounds or scratches on your hands. Do not crush or flush ticks, dead or alive.

Dangers: Severe tick infestation can cause anemia and even death, especially in very small or very old animals. Pets of all ages experience discomfort and stress. Many develop infections by scratching to free themselves from a feeding tick. Some ticks can transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme disease.

Treatment/Prevention: Ask your veterinarian about a vaccine which can protect your dog against Lyme disease. However, the vaccine doesn’t repel ticks. You should still avoid them and remove any you find. Most flea-fighting products are also effective against ticks.

Fleas are brownish-black and about 1/8" long. Adult fleas feed on the blood of warm-blooded animals (including you and your pet) and bite their hosts repeatedly until they are mature enough to move onto a warm body!

Immature fleas live in grass and underbrush and in your carpet, upholstery, draperies, and tiny cracks in the floor… waiting until they are mature enough to move onto a warm body!

Transmission: Pets can gather fleas by walking through an infested grassy area, through contact with other infested animals, or almost anywhere outdoors. They can also lay eggs indoors. Fleas are common in large environments, and some trees act as "day-care" centers for young fleas which then drop to the ground in large numbers.

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Transmission: Pets can gather fleas by walking through an infested grassy area, through contact with other infested animals, or simply by sleeping in an area where fleas are hiding. Fleas have no wings, but they are famous for the distances they can jump… onto your pet!

Fleas thrive in warm, humid weather. Under these conditions, each female flea can lay up to thirty eggs a day. Each egg can mature and begin reproducing within thirty days in warm weather. During a mild winter, flea eggs and larvae can incubate for up to six months - waiting to mature in better weather. Southerners fight fleas all year, with battles peaking between May and October.
However, you must kill what you comb out or the fleas to your pet’s skin and are very valuable with long-haired pets.

Combining chemicals

pet’s environment.

bloodstream and poison fleas which bite your pet. They do not repel, but do help to break the cycle of flea in-festation by killing adult biting fleas. Ask your veterinar-ian if systemics would help your pet.

PRODUCT CONTENTS:
The safest insecticides for most pets are pyrethrins, a natural compound derived from chrysanthemum flow-ers, and the synthetic pyrethroid compounds. Look for these ingredients in products used directly on your pet or used indoors. Some cats are sensitive to pyrethrins.

Chemicals which regulate insect growth, including methoprene, prevent fleas from maturing into adult, biting parasites. These are among the safest insecti-cides you can use and are included in products for both indoor and outdoor use. The trademarks Precor and Vigren identify products which contain metho-prene.

Baking soda, borax, or silica gel dehydrate adult and immature fleas living in your carpets. Use these natu-ral products as carefully and thoroughly as any other powder. Services which visit your home often use a variation of this method; success will vary.

Traditional herbal and organic remedies include tansy, pennyroyal, sweet woodruff, rosemary, lavender, ce-dar oil, and citric oil. The vapors of these organics are easy to use and can kill some of the para-sites already on your pet...how many depends upon Rascal’s size and density of coat. Because they concen-trate chemicals onto one small area, collars leave most of the pet unprotected and can cause irritations or allergic reactions to skin, eyes, or nose. This is especially true for cats, kittens, puppies, and any pet with sensitive skin. (Any collar used on a cat should have an elastic feature.)

Flea-fighting products are designed to kill parasites or to repel them. Few can do both. Combining chemicals used around your pet is dangerous; only combine products of the same brand, line, and con-tent. However, combinations of some kind are usually necessary since you must protect your pet and your pet’s environment.

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Traditional herbal and organic remedies include tansy, pennyroyal, sweet woodruff, rosemary, lavender, ce-dar oil, and citric oil. The vapors of these organics don’t kill parasites but may help to repel them. Grow-ing samples of these herbs may help repel insects in your yard. Natural chemicals are chemicals and should be used on your pet ONLY at your veterinarian’s ad-vise.

PRODUCTS FOR INDOORS & OUTDOORS:

Foggers (or ‘bombe’) don’t reach all areas of a room or yard equally, but might get into cracks and small areas more effectively than sprays...and they work while you’re away. Many of these used indoors have residual effects, helping to repel or kill for several weeks.

Area sprays allow you access to difficult locations, but you must mask yourself to avoid inhaling fumes (indoors or outdoors). Some have residual repellent effects and some don’t. Those intended for use outdoors may not withstand rain. Area sprays should NOT be used on your pet.

Area powders can be messy and can’t get into draperies and upholstery like sprays or foggers can. Most have repellant effects if you can leave the powder down, but those which are vacuumed up may give limited protection. Those intended for outdoor use may not withstand damp or rain. Animals must be removed from the area during use of ANY of these products.

PRODUCTS FOR YOUR PET:

Shampoo clean as they kill parasites which are actu-ally on the pet during the bath but leave no residual repellent behind. Many protect sensitive skin and coats with conditioners.

Dips do not clean, but remain on the pet to act as armor - repelling parasites for up to two weeks or until wet. Read labels carefully; dips can be caustic and are not for use with young animals, cats, or others who lick themselves.

Collars are easy to use and can kill some of the para-sites already on your pet...how many depends upon Rascal’s size and density of coat. Because they concen-trate chemicals onto one small area, collars leave most of the pet unprotected and can cause irritations or allergic reactions to skin, eyes, or nose. This is especially true for cats, kittens, puppies, and any pet with sensitive skin. (Any collar used on a cat should have an elastic feature.)

Powders repel (not kill) parasites and can offer relief for short-haired pets, especially those who hate the damp of sprays or baths. To be effective, fleas must come in direct contact with the powder. It can be difficult to apply to long-haired pets and can cause irritation to sensitive skin. It can build up to toxic levels if not frequently re-moved and is dangerous when swallowed.

Combs offer a chemical-free alternative, and diligent use can make a huge difference in Rascal’s comfort.

However, you must kill what you comb out or the fleas merely hide in the carpet. Combs allow you dry access to your pet’s skin and are very valuable with long-haired pets.

Systemics are prescription medications taken orally or applied topically. The chemicals work into Rascal’s bloodstream and poison fleas which bite your pet. They do not repel, but do help to break the cycle of flea in-festation by killing adult biting fleas. Ask your veterinarian if systemics would help your pet.

Clear the battlefield

Adult parasites already chewing on your pet are a problem, but preventative tactics are required to win the fight. Because adult fleas represent less than five percent of the flea population, your efforts will be most effective in the environment in which those immature fleas wait.

IN YOUR HOME:

Vacuum, dehumidum, and vacuum again - carpets, drap-eries, upholstery, wooden floors, and Rascal’s sleeping areas - several times each week during heavy infesta-tion. Put a flea collar inside the bag to kill the fleas you vacuum up; even better, throw the bag away.

Treat the entry areas to your home weekly - win-dow sills and frames, screens, door sills and frames - with flea-fighting products.

Keep a towel on Rascal’s favorite napping area to catch flea eggs. Wash the infested towel each day, replacing it with a fresh one.

Treat your home with sprays, powders, or foggers. Use a product intended for indoor use and select care-fully (see above). Any powder used on carpets should be worked deep into the fibers, left overnight or longer, and thoroughly vacuumed. Pets, especially cats, must be excluded from the area until cleaning is completed.

IN YOUR YARD:

Water kills flea eggs and larvae, but won’t kill adult fleas.