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Fleas - How To Keep Them Away

Fleas are a parasite that feed on blood from dogs, cats, and even humans at times! Adult fleas living and feeding on your pet make up only 1% of the flea's life cycle. The other 99% of the flea's life time is spent as eggs, larvae, and pupae in your carpet, furniture, drapes, etc. Dogs and cats share the same fleas.

Can fleas cause harm to my pets?

Fleas can cause anemia, especially in young or debilitated animals. A single female flea can take up to 15 times her body weight in blood over the several weeks of her adult life. In addition, fleas can carry several diseases and they transmit one of the most common tapeworms of the dog and cat, *Dipylidium caninum*.

Fleas can also cause allergic skin reactions in both dogs and cats. The severity of the allergy can range from increased shedding to large, infected bald areas that can only be treated medically.

How do I prevent a flea problem?

The best way to prevent a flea problem is to use a good quality topical medication. These medications are applied monthly and it is recommended to use them year round. It is important that all animals in the house have flea preventative applied monthly, even those that do not go outside. Over the counter products in the pet shops use different chemicals than the veterinary approved products. We have seen some serious and even fatal reactions from these types of products. Only use veterinary recommended products to keep your pet healthy and free of fleas.

What products are recommended to treat and prevent fleas on my pets?

FRONTLINE PLUS- is a liquid applied monthly as drops on the skin. This product kills both adult fleas and ticks. Most fleas are killed before they have a chance to bite your pet, making it a very good choice for pets allergic to fleas.

ADVANTAGE MULTI is a liquid topical ointment that is applied monthly as drops to the skin. This product will kill adult fleas and prevent their eggs from hatching, prevents heartworm disease, and protects pets from various other parasites.

Heartworms and your Cat

Heartworms are large parasites that live in the arteries of the heart and cause heart failure. Mosquitoes transfer the immature heartworms from dog to cat via their bite in much the same way that malaria is transmitted. Cats do not have to be outside to be exposed to heartworms. Heartworms were once considered to be a problem only in dogs. Recently we have realized that cats can become infected with heartworms and develop severe disease.

Prevention: Cats should be put on medicine to kill the immature heartworm before it has a chance to mature in the heart. In Kentucky, we recommend that all cats be on preventative medicine year round. The preventative medicines also protect against a variety of intestinal parasites which are commonly found in the environment. The preventative medicine we recommend is **Advantage Multi**. It is a topical medication that also protects against fleas, hookworms and roundworms.

Testing: Cats should be tested yearly, even when kept on prevention year round. Nothing is 100% effective.

Treatment: There is no safe or effective treatment for heartworms in cats. We are only able to manage the clinical signs. Even a small number of heartworms can be fatal in a cat. That is why it is important to keep our cats on heartworm prevention.