



Pet Care Advice

Fleas, Ticks and Worms

Fleas are the primary cause of skin problems in dogs and cats. Some pets suffer from an allergic reaction to the flea saliva and need only a couple of bites to trigger a severe skin reaction. Fleas also transmit the common flea tapeworm and can cause anaemia in severe cases. Pet fleas will also bite people although they cannot live on humans.

How Fleas Spread

To understand how to control fleas on our pets we need to understand the flea lifecycle.

1. Only the **adult fleas** are present on our pets. The ones we see make up less than 5% of the total flea infestation.
2. Each adult female flea can lay up to **2,000 eggs**. These drop off your pet into carpets, upholstery and bedding in your home and can live dormant in them for up to a year.
3. The eggs hatch into **larvae** which live off detritus and flea faeces in carpets, furniture or pet bedding, after which they pupate. The pupa stage (or cocoon) can remain dormant for more than a year.
4. **Pupae** are stimulated into hatching by the movement and warmth of passing pets or people.
5. The **adult fleas** emerge and are ready for their first blood meal.

Signs of Flea Infestation

- Frequent scratching or intense irritation
- Tiny black specs of 'flea' dirt in the pet's fur or left on pet bedding
- Small spots or scabs on the skin
- Areas of skin irritation or hair loss

Controlling Fleas

Treat your pet

- Use a product specifically designed for your species of pet and suitable for its size and weight. **Products designed for dogs containing Permethrin can be extremely toxic for cats.**

- We recommend a 'prescription only' product. This is a 'spot on' treatment which is easily applied directly to the skin on the back of your pet's neck and is more effective than over the counter powders or shampoos.
- It kills existing fleas within 24 hours and gives protection for 4 weeks.
- It is not absorbed into your pet's blood stream and does not contain organophosphates.

Treat your home to kill eggs and larvae

- Vacuum all areas where your pet sleeps including the car if your pet travels with you, then empty the vacuum cleaner bag. -- Wash all pet bedding at 60 degrees centigrade.
- Spray your home with a **recommended household insecticide**. This will kill existing eggs and prevent re-infestation for 6 - 12 months.

Treat your pets regularly to prevent recurrence

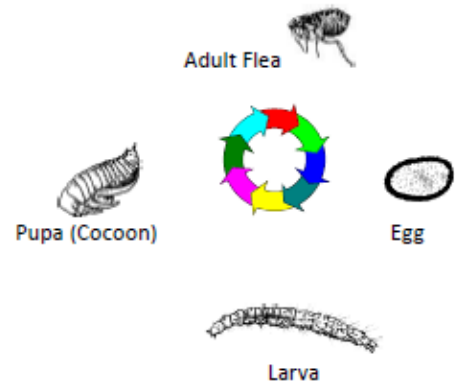
Monthly treatment of all pets in the household will prevent re-infestation of the environment so that further spraying of the house may be unnecessary.

Ticks

Ticks are often found in rural vegetation especially where other animals graze and attach themselves to our pets as they brush past. At first they are very tiny and often pale in colour but they bury their mouth parts in the skin and expand into a round pea shaped lump as they feed on blood.

Dogs are at most risk from ticks but they can attach themselves to other pets and even humans. In young animals ticks can cause anaemia but in adult pets (and humans) the main risk is Lyme Disease.

Ticks are more common in Scotland, Wales and the West Country so if you are taking your pet on holiday ask advice about prevention. Ticks in warmer climates also carry further serious illnesses and pets travelling abroad should be protected against them.



Most of the fleas that jump onto our pets come from eggs that have been laid in our homes.

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Protection Against Ticks

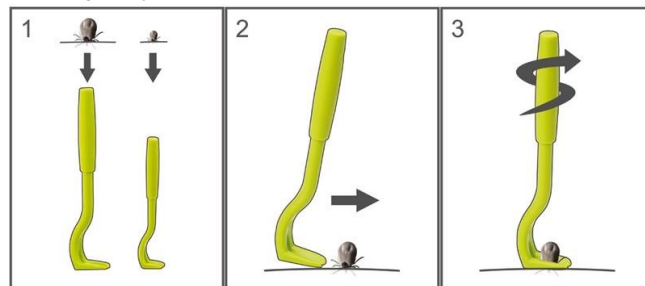
We recommend either:

- a spot-on treatment which will prevent ticks biting and can be applied monthly or at least 48 hours before travel. This is ideal for short visits.
- a collar which provides ongoing protection for 8 months. Ideal for dogs who are regularly at risk from ticks.

Tick Removal

Ticks should not be pulled off your dog as their strong jaws will remain lodged in the skin and may cause infection. Gripping the tick close to the mouth parts with tweezers or a Tick Hook and twisting it out will release it safely.

Our nurses are experienced with this technique and will be happy to help.



Worms

All cats and dogs will get worms at some stage in their lives. In puppies and kittens an infestation of these parasites can be a serious health concern and may even be life threatening. Adult pets may carry worms with few symptoms beyond a dull coat, possible weight loss and lethargy.

There are several different species of worm. The two most common in the UK are:

Roundworms (Toxocara)

These white worms look like pieces of string. 40% of puppies have them living in their intestine and 25% of dogs carry the eggs in their fur. **Roundworms are a particular public health concern as they may be transmitted to humans and can cause health problems for children and people with poor immune systems.** This can happen by swallowing the microscopic eggs found in untreated pet's fur and in the grass from pet faeces. Good personal hygiene is essential.

Cats often become infected with Roundworm after catching mice and voles carrying worm larvae.

Tapeworms

These attach themselves to the small intestine and can grow up to 5 metres long. Pale egg segments, which look like a grain of rice, can sometimes be seen in the pet's faeces or the fur around the tail. Often pets become infected whilst grooming by swallowing fleas that are carrying tapeworm larvae. These larvae soon turn into adult worms.

Other Worms

Other worms that our pets may be exposed to are Lungworm, Whipworm and Hookworm. These are less common but are passed to our pets through the environment or via contact with creatures such as Ticks, Slugs and Snails. These worms are more prevalent in different parts of the country so if you take your pet on holiday ensure that their worm treatment is done promptly when you return. Your regular spot-on and tablet wormer may already protect against these worms as well as roundworm and tapeworm so do ask us for advice.

If you are travelling abroad your pet may be exposed to Heartworm.

Roundworm and Tapeworm Control

Puppies and kittens first come into contact with worms from their mothers and so pets should be treated from an early age.

The worming tablets we recommend for dogs are safe, palatable and may be concealed in food. They are effective with a single dose and proven to control the type of intestinal worms normally found in UK pets. Spot-on wormers are also available for cats. A combination flea, worm and parasite treatment is available for both dogs and cats. Our vets can advise on the most suitable product for your pet.

It is important to note that worm treatments will rid your pet of any worms present in the intestine at the time of treatment but will not prevent re-infection.

To keep the likelihood of worms to a minimum we recommend that your pet is treated every 3 months.

Complete Parasite Protection

The Flea, Worm and Tick products we recommend are more effective than those which do not require veterinary prescription and we dispense them in accordance with BSAVA guidelines. To enable us to dispense regular parasite protection, your pet will need to be registered with us and have an annual health check during which we will record his or her weight to ensure a safe and effective dose is given. Some of the easy to apply spot-on products available will treat both fleas and worms plus other parasites such as ear mites and sarcoptic mange (carried by foxes).

For further information, help and advice please contact your local surgery.

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