



Flea and Tick Control

Why Control?

Fleas are the most common external parasite of pets. Flea allergy is one of the most common skin diseases of dogs and cats. Flea control has always been a challenge for veterinarians and pet owners because the adult fleas cause the clinical signs, yet the majority of the flea population (eggs, larvae and pupae) are found off the pet in and around the home. Fleas can be picked up on the street, in the pet shop or even brought home by the owner. Fleas can carry tapeworm larvae and infect your pet if eaten.

Ticks are less common but are potentially very serious to dogs as they may carry one of the "tick fever" parasites and infect your dog as they suck the blood. Dogs usually catch ticks when they are taken outside to exercise, especially in parks and grassy areas.

The Life Cycle of the Flea:

Eggs are laid in the hair coat and fall off your pet, the eggs are difficult to kill and most will not be killed as they fall off your pet's body no matter what adult flea killer you may have used. They live and develop in the carpet, sofa or cracks in the floor. Larvae are susceptible to traditional insecticides (like cockroach spray), and insect growth regulators.

They may hide for several months until the conditions are right, then they will hatch and come out looking for their first meal. However the entire life cycle of a flea can be completed in 16 days! This is how your house can become infested with fleas even if you rarely see one on your pet.

The Life cycle of the tick.

Ticks feed and mate on the host, but always lay their eggs in the environment, usually in the wild and grassy areas. Ticks molt between life stages off your pet. A baby tick has to molt three times before it grows into its adult stage.

The primary food source of a tick is the blood sucked from your pet and it is necessary for them to consume blood before each molt. Ticks will crawl to the tip of grasses and leave and wait for your pet to walk by then they attach to their fur. Depending upon the type of tick and conditions, they will feed three times on one or more pets during the completion of their life cycle.

FLEA AND TICK CONTROL PRODUCTS RECOMMENDED BY TAI WAI:

1) Frontline Spray and Frontline Plus (fipronil) from Merial

Fipronil is a broad spectrum insecticide available as a spray or a spot-on. It collects in the oils of the skin and hair follicles and is released onto the hair over time which helps give it a longer lasting effect. It is best not to bathe for a day or two before or after using Frontline so it can be absorbed properly.

It is effective against both fleas and ticks which is why many vets recommend this product for dogs.

Frontline Plus also contains the insect growth regulator, S-methoprene which helps control eggs and adult fleas.

In spray formulation it should kill fleas at 95% for up to 30 days after application on dogs even with weekly bathing, and can be used from 8 weeks on. The major problem with the spray is the high volume of alcohol that is applied, and some cats and small dogs will show minor reactions with this (as well as being inflammable when wet!)

This product is very poisonous to rabbits and other fluffy pets and must not be used.

2) Revolution (selamectin) from Pfizer

This insecticide is designed as a once-a-month heartworm preventive and flea preventive for dogs and cats as young as 6 weeks old. It kills adult fleas and can be used to treat sarcoptic mange and ear mites. It also helps control roundworms and hookworms. It **does not** have a strong effect against ticks, that is why we prefer dogs that go outside to be protected with Frontline.

The product is placed on the skin at the back of the neck, but is absorbed into the body to have its effect when parasites take it in with a blood meal. We like to recommend this product for cats as it will protect them against both fleas and heartworm. It can also be used for rabbits at the appropriate dosage.

3) Program (Lufenuron) from Novartis.

We do not sell this product, but mention it as many people misunderstand what it does. Female fleas that feed on pets treated with lufenuron produce sterile eggs. The product does not kill adult fleas. It is an easy way to break the life cycle but pets remain fully susceptible to the emergence of any fleas already present in the environment. Therefore, 4 to 7 months may pass before the flea free state is reached. In order to stop the life cycle, every animal in the environment must receive lufenuron or another insect growth regulator.

Pets should be treated for fleas with an adult flea-killing product during the first few weeks of starting Program.

About Traditional Insecticides / Over-the-Counter Flea Control Products.

Many shampoos are available and some have insect growth regulators included. Shampoos are less effective than sprays, dips or spot-ons because they have little long term or residual effects, that means they only kill the fleas or ticks which are on your pet at that time.

Some Tick and Flea collars are quite effective, but people often put them on and forget to change them, so the efficiency is lost.