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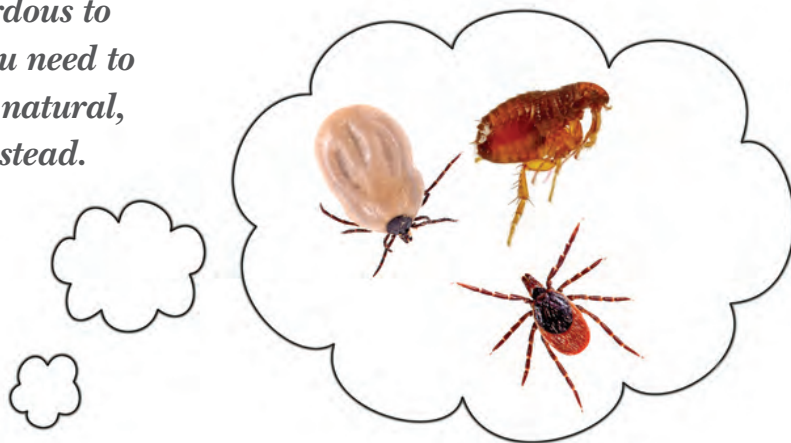
Spot-on



By Deva Khalsa, VMD

flea and tick preventives

Spot-on flea and tick products are hazardous to your dog or cat's health. Here's what you need to know about them – and about the more natural, non-toxic alternatives you can turn to instead.



Many people regularly apply spot-on flea and tick preventives to their dogs and cats. Even those whose animals have little to no chance of getting fleas or ticks dutifully administer toxic spot-on products, every single month of the year. We love our pets, so we want what's best for them – and certainly, no one wants their dog or cat to get infested with fleas or contract a nasty tick-borne disease. But harsh chemical flea and tick prevention is not the answer, and spot-on products can do more harm than good. There are safer, less toxic ways to protect your pet from these bloodsucking pests.

A close-up look at spot-on chemicals

The chemicals used in spot-on flea and tick products go right through your pet's skin and into his internal systems, increasing his risk of cancer and other diseases. The toxins in these products circulate through your dog or cat from one to over three months (depending on the product), at levels high enough to kill a flea or tick just as it bites and reaches blood. It's similar to soaking a sponge with insecticide and leaving it in the middle of the kitchen, knowing that cockroaches will die as soon as they walk over it; after a spot-on treatment, your dog or cat's body holds insecticide residue and essentially becomes a poison bomb.

In 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency began reviewing the safety of spot-on flea and tick products. What they found about three common substances used in these products was not pretty.



- One company's website states that **fipronil** is absorbed into the sebaceous glands of the skin. This gives the impression fipronil does not migrate into your pet's body, which is simply not true. Dr. Virginia Dobozy of the EPA's Pesticide Division did a study that traced radioactive fibronil in exposed dogs, and found it in their fat, organs, urine and feces. Research shows that, even at low doses, fipronil has the potential for nervous system and thyroid toxicity, thyroid cancer, altered thyroid hormone levels, liver toxicity, kidney damage, cancer, convulsions, hair loss at or beyond the point of application, moist inflammation, and chemical burn and itching.

- Another commonly used spot-on ingredient, **imidacloprid**, is a systemic insecticide belonging to a class of chemicals called neonicotinoids. Imidacloprid has been found to cause thyroid lesions, liver toxicity and increased cholesterol levels, and has the potential for damaging the kidneys, liver, thyroid, heart, lungs, spleen, adrenals, brain and gonads. As a neurotoxin, imidacloprid has also caused unco-ordination, labored breathing and muscle weakness.

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EVALUATE HIS FLEA AND TICK *exposure risk*

Pest prevention should not be given a "one size fits all" approach. Every family pet has a particular lifestyle, and his exposure to fleas and ticks depends on where and how he lives. Look at the incidence of fleas and ticks in your region, and at the likelihood of your dog or cat being exposed to them.

For instance, say you have three small dogs who play in a securely-fenced, well-maintained yard and who rarely meet other dogs. The chances of them getting fleas and ticks are low. You can simply routinely check their skin and coats, and avoid using any toxic prevention.

If the same three dogs live in Florida, fleas are going to be a year-round problem while ticks are not very likely. Now place those three dogs in upstate New York and add long uncut grass and close proximity to deer. In this situation, ticks will be a significant problem.

The same reasoning applies to cats. Indoor felines that never or rarely go out, or come into contact with other animals, are much less likely to get fleas and ticks than those that roam freely.

The time of year also plays a role. Many people continue giving their dogs and cats flea and tick preventives during cold snowy winters, just for good measure, when nary a flea or tick is even around.

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Protect your dog with garlic

Garlic can help protect dogs from fleas and ticks, and from the infections that can arise from their bites. It's the state of a dog's immune system that determines whether or not an infection takes hold, and this is where garlic really comes into play. It's a natural antibiotic, has a broad-spectrum antibacterial effect, and increases the immune activity of killer cells. A large dog can have two small cloves of garlic a day, while a small dog can have one-half to one small clove a day.



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- Most folks consider **pyrethrins** (naturally-occurring compounds from the chrysanthemum plant), along with **pyrethroids** and **permethrins** (their synthetic counterparts), to be less hazardous alternatives to the above chemicals. In fact, the opposite is true. Information released through the Freedom of Information Act to the Washington-based Center for Public Integrity (CPI) showed that at least 1,600 pet deaths from pyrethroid spot-on treatments were reported to the EPA from 2002 through 2007. That's nearly double the number of reported fatalities linked to the other compounds. Pyrethroid spot-ons also accounted for over half the "major" pesticide pet reactions reported, including brain damage, heart attacks and seizures.

To complicate matters, ticks and fleas are becoming resistant to spot-on chemicals, and because of this, manufacturers are adding more potent ingredients, or combining a number of different toxic ingredients, to each dose of their products.

The bottom line is that there is no chemical pharmaceutical flea and tick product, spot-on or otherwise, that does not adversely affect your pet's health. So what's the solution?

Safe alternative products

If you live in an area with a high tick or flea population, and your pet is at risk, there are some excellent natural solutions available. I've used the following products with many of my patients, and find them to work unfailingly and consistently.

1 PetzLife makes an Herbal Defense Powder (TickZ) and Herbal Defense Spray (Complete Coat). The powder is fed for five consecutive days, mixed in wet food morning and evening. It contains flea and tick-fighting herbs like Quassia Amara (a tree native to South America), anise, Oregon grape root, spirulina, thyme and tansy. The spray is for topical use when you take your dog into infested areas, and features extracts from the wood and bark of Quassia Amara.

2 Fleas are much easier to deal with naturally than ticks are. Ticked Off is a safe, all-natural and effective spray that kills fleas, as well as flea larvae and eggs. It contains hydrolyzed silica that works by suffocating the little critters, and also features cedar oil. It can be sprayed on your pet as well as on bedding and around the home environment.

3 Ruff on Bugs is another topical spray that reliably prevents ticks as well as fleas. It's made with organic essential oils such as lemongrass, cinnamon, cedar, citronella, geranium and rosemary, in non-GMO oils.

It's no secret that minimizing the toxins our dogs and cats are exposed to will reduce their risk of cancer and other illnesses. One of the best ways we can do this is by replacing chemical spot-on flea and tick products with safer, more natural alternatives. Spring represents a fresh new start, so let's start it with safe flea and tick prevention! 🐾



Shop for SAFE flea and tick products at:

Deserving Pets, deservingpets.com

PetzLife, petzlife.com

LifeFORCE Nature Dog, lifeforcepet.com