

Over-the-Counter (OTC) Parasite Treatments

It's that time of year again.....the days are longer, the temperatures and humidity are rising and most of us are recovering from Spring Fever by spending more time outside. With the change in season also comes the onslaught of fleas, ticks, mosquitoes, and many other types of internal and external parasites that affect us and our pets. Whether our pets spend zero time outside or one hundred percent of their time outside, they are all vulnerable to parasites, as we humans can serve as carriers or "vectors" of these little creatures to our pets. Before we begin the discussion of flea/tick control, let us keep in mind that a very small percent of the adult fleas which we may see on our pets is the tip of the iceberg. The vast majority (at least 85%) of fleas/ticks are in the environment ie) yards, sand boxes, carpeting, etc.

We as veterinarians often times see patients that have received OTC flea/tick treatments such as shampoos, sprays, collars, and topical drops applied to the skin. However, these OTC products have proven time and time again to be unreliable, short-lived, short-acting, minimally effective, and often times very dangerous to the pets on which they are used. The marketing of these OTC products is such that consumers believe they are the same or equivalent products sold through veterinarians, so therefore they misconceive that these products must also be safe and effective.

OTC flea/tick shampoos only last for the amount of time they are on the animal and once rinsed off, have very minimal effect on the parasites. Once the animal returns to the environment, those fleas or ticks that are waiting in the pet's bedding or carpet of the house start feeding on the pet and the vicious cycle continues.

OTC flea/tick pet sprays can be very messy, smell bad and typically do not have long-term efficacy. Since the OTC sprays do not last very long, immature flea/tick life-stages which may be in your yard or carpet quickly develop into adult blood-sucking parasites that feed off of us and our pets. Once again, the vicious cycle continues.

OTC flea/tick collars work in the area of the pet's head/neck/shoulders. That leaves the whole other 75% of the pet's body completely unprotected from blood-sucking, disease-spreading parasites.

OTC flea/tick topical drops are available from a wide variety of pet supply stores, grocers, and other retailers. Many of these products are ineffective against the fleas and ticks, however cause severe, even life-threatening injury to the pets on which they are used. It is not uncommon for pets to still have a large number of live external parasites even after these products have been applied.

Your veterinarian is the safest and most reliable source to obtain your topical flea/tick/mosquito preventives. Any questions of how the product is administered, the appropriate dosing according to your pet's weight and species, and the proper dosing schedule can all be safely obtained from your veterinarian. With the help of your veterinarian you can properly prevent flea/tick/mosquito infestations as well as tapeworm infections with diarrhea or vomiting, blood-borne diseases, and miserable skin problems for your pet. Not only will using the products your veterinarian recommends for your pet keep them healthy, it will also make for a safer, more enjoyable warm-weather season. Please consult your veterinarian on the prescription products that are best for you and your pet.