

How to Control Fleas & Ticks....Once and For All!

Most people have unrealistic expectations when it comes to controlling fleas and ticks on their pets. Everybody would love a quick fix or magic pill that solves their problems immediately, but that is not the way the real world works. Often companies run advertisements that lead you to believe that their products are all you need for immediate results that will last a long time. Flea and tick control actually is a multi-billion dollar industry in the United States, and lots of people would like a piece of that action. The truth is that new products come to market all the time. Few of them truly work, and some of them are downright dangerous for your pet. I will tell you what you need to know to get a flea or tick problem under control...and keep it that way.

If you live in Florida with pets and do not have a flea problem, you still must take preventative measures or, sooner or later, it's almost guaranteed you will have an issue with infestation. Fleas live outside and invade your environment in a variety of ways. The most common way they enter your yard is by hitching a ride on other animals that pass through your backyard, including raccoons, opossums, stray cats, squirrels, rabbits, rats, mice, your neighbor's dog and so on. How extensive can the flea population on an outdoor critter be? Opossums, as an example, have been found to have more than 1,000 fleas in a single animal!

Fleas love shady places in your yard and will take up residence under porches and decks, as well as in the mulch underneath your hedges and shrubs. In other words, fleas live in the very same places your pets enjoy

going when they are outside. Ticks, on the other hand, like to crawl up bushes and trees and drop down onto unsuspecting pets that walk beneath them.

I often have clients tell me that the flea control product they put on their pet is not working because they still see fleas on their pets. In response, I always ask if they ever see fleas on their own skin or clothing, or anywhere in the house, besides on their pet. If they do not, then the flea control product is doing its job and killing the fleas that have hitched a ride into the house on the animal. You can't expect a product that you put on your pet to immediately zap a flea dead the minute it jumps on your pet. If a manufacturer claims that its product does, you are being misled, and it probably is a bogus product. Good topical products that kill fleas do exist, and your veterinarian can recommend the best ones. A quality product will kill fleas within 12-24 hours. A high-quality product will kill flea eggs and larvae, as well, which prevents fleas from setting up camp in your house and multiplying until you have millions of fleas in your house and a real problem on your hands. The same holds true for ticks, although they take even longer to die.

When you continue to see fleas on your pet, but not in your house, then it is time to treat the source of the fleas-outdoors. Spraying your yard and lanai yourself or hiring a professional to do it will kill the fleas at their source. In the Sarasota area, we are very fortunate to have several companies that specialize in natural and organic pest control. Once again, you should ask your veterinarian to recommend a safe and effective product if you plan to do it yourself. Recently, I visited two major retailers with a friend of mine, who is an exterminator. Of the seven pest-control products the stores were selling, he recommended

only one that he considered would be effective and yield satisfactory results.

When spraying your yard, it is critical to focus on the shady areas (under shrubs, decks, etc.). Fleas are no more likely to be hanging out in the middle of a yard in direct sunlight when the temperature is higher than 90 degrees than we would be. If you are spraying for ticks, it is important to spray up into the shrubs, hedges, and small trees if you want to reach them. Be sure to remind your exterminator to do the same if you hire one. It is also a good idea to have the area sprayed on a regular basis to prevent new fleas from establishing residence in your yard.