

Tiny Pests

Summertime is here!!! Kids are out of school, family vacations are near, and with all the seasonal activities, it's very important not to let your pet's health fall to the back burner. Because this winter was so mild, fleas and ticks are going to be a huge problem this summer.

Fleas are small, brown or black, wingless insects with flattened bodies. There are several types of fleas that infest the hair coats of animals, as well as, some that may feed on people. These blood-sucking insects may cause anemia from blood loss in young or heavily infested animals. Fleas also spread dog and cat tapeworms and can carry several viral and bacterial diseases. Flea bites can also cause skin allergies, rashes, and sores on both pets and owners.

The best place to look for fleas on your pet is the hindquarter region; base of tail, stomach and groin area. Sometimes there are no fleas found, however, there is evidence of an infestation. The tiny black granules that resemble black pepper are flea feces and consist of digested blood.

After taking a blood meal, the flea will drop off the animal and deposit their eggs in cracks, crevices, and carpeting. A single breeding pair of fleas may produce 20,000 fleas in only three months! This allows flea populations to get out of control very quickly. Flea prevention is the only reliable method to stop this infestation of your pet and their environment.

Ticks are blood-sucking parasites that will infest both animals and people. They will attach to the skin and feed on their host's blood. The tick bite can become infected and some tick species can produce a toxin that can cause paralysis and/or death in untreated patients. In addition, they can also spread several diseases, such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme Disease. Symptoms of these diseases may include fever, limping, and anorexia. If you have any questions about fleas or ticks, please contact your local veterinarian.

The best way to avoid all of these possible problems is to use a good flea and tick prevention, such as Frontline and Revolution. It is best to apply it the same day as the heartworm prevention so it is easy to remember. Having your house and yard sprayed by an exterminator will help fleas and ticks from even getting into the environment. If there is already a flea infestation, Frontline or Revolution can be overwhelmed and make you think it's not working. The environment needs to be treated, as well as the pet, to ensure adequate protection. Prevention is key to keeping fleas and ticks under control. Make sure when applying Frontline that you wait 2 days **before or after** a bath to ensure its efficacy. After those 2 days, the product is waterproof for a whole month.

At Argyle Veterinary Hospital, your pet's health is our number one concern, if you have any questions or need to be seen, please call (940) 464-3231.

Nicole Koenigsknecht DVM