

## FLEA AND TICK TREATMENT FOR YOUR DOG

### Fleas

Flea infestations are one of the most common health problems in dogs and cats. Almost every dog and cat will become infested with fleas at some time during its life. These tiny pests can be more than an annoyance. They make life miserable by disrupting your household with a vicious cycle of biting and scratching.

There are two main species of flea in the UK - the cat flea and the dog flea. The cat flea is far more common than the dog flea. It is able to live and breed on both dogs and cats as well as to bite other small pets and humans. The cat is often the initiator of the flea problem when both dogs and cats are living in the same household due to their outdoor roaming lifestyle.

The flea season was traditionally thought to last from the end of April to the end of November. However central heating and fitted carpets enable fleas to breed throughout the year, turning them into an all-year-round problem.

Although adult fleas cause most of the clinical problems related to fleas, they represent only 5% of the total flea population. The other 95% consists of immature stages of the flea life cycle which infest the pet's environment (bedding, carpets, furniture etc.). The full life cycle of a flea can take up to several months or as little as three weeks, depending upon temperature and humidity.

### Flea Life Cycle

#### Egg Stage

A female flea can lay as many as 50 eggs per day on your pet. The eggs are not sticky; they fall off your pet into the surroundings and hatch in two to five days. A female can lay about 1500 eggs in her lifetime.

#### Larval Stage

After hatching, the larvae move away from light into the cracks and crevices around your home and feed on "flea dirt" (dried blood excreted by the flea) and other debris in the environment. The larvae grow, moult twice, and then spin cocoons, where they grow to pupae.

#### Pupal Stage

Pupae are the most protected life stage; they can remain dormant for up to a year. When the environmental conditions are right they will hatch out as adult fleas.

#### Adult Stage

Adult fleas emerge from their cocoons when they detect heat, vibrations and exhaled carbon dioxide indicating that a host is nearby. Once they jump onto a host, the adults mate and begin the life cycle all over again. The entire life cycle can be as short as 3 to 4 weeks or as long as several months.

### Warning Signs

The first step to stopping a flea infestation is to be aware of their presence. Keep an eye out for the warning signs that fleas are on your pet.

#### Flea Dirt

Black specks on your pet or in your pet's bed could be flea dirt, which is dried blood excreted by the adult fleas. There are two easy ways to check for flea dirt:

#### Flea Comb

Run the comb over your pet, making sure the comb reaches the skin through the coat. If black specks are on the comb when you pull it off, they may be flea dirt. If fleas are on the comb, drown them in a bowl of soapy water before they can get away or jump back onto your dog. To distinguish whether a black speck is flea dirt, place the specks on white absorbent paper and dampen. Flea dirt turns red/brown on contact with water.

#### White Paper Test

Place a white paper towel beneath your pet and rub your hands across its fur. If black specks appear on the towel, they may be flea dirt, again dampening will distinguish.

#### Agitation/Scratching

Your dog may become very restless, annoyed and may scratch excessively if infested with fleas, beware though, as some pets will not scratch when they have fleas. It is important to check them regularly. Of course, fleas are not the only things that can make your dog scratch. Consult your vet if your dog has any skin irritation or soreness.

**Fleas can affect your pet's health** in the following ways:

#### Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD)

When a flea bites your pet, it deposits a small amount of saliva in the skin. Your pet can develop an allergic reaction to this saliva or to the flea's faeces (FAD), which causes itching and irritation. In addition to your pet scratching or biting excessively around the tail, groin or backside, scabs or bumps may also appear on your pet's skin.

#### Tapeworm

Tapeworm eggs are ingested by the flea's larval stage when feeding in the pet's environment. The worm eggs develop inside the developing flea, if the flea happens to be ingested by your pet whilst grooming, the tapeworm is released and continues to develop into an adult worm within the intestine of your pet.

#### Anaemia

Can occur in young, older or ill pets if too many fleas suck their blood. The symptoms of anaemia include pale gums, weakness and lethargy.

### What To Do

#### Vacuuming

Vacuum frequently wherever your dog has been, especially in your car (if your pet travels in your car), around flooring in your home and on any furniture that is frequented by your pet. This helps to clean up as many immature fleas (eggs, larvae and pupae) as possible and provides any that are there with the stimulus to hatch.

#### Washing

Wash your pet's bedding, blanket and other washable items frequently in the hottest water possible (check the label to make sure that washing in hot water isn't a problem).

## Flea Treatment

Toxic medicine, flea and tick shampoos, powders, sprays and dips are poisoning our pets. With today's increasingly toxic environment, our pets are coming down with serious and inexplicable health problems. A pesticide collar is nothing but a poison necklace around your pet's head. It emits a constant toxic cloud that your pet inhales, and so do you, every time you hug your pet.

Each year, pets are subjected to a vast array of toxic chemicals intended to kill fleas and ticks. Many owners probably assume that these products have been subjected to rigorous testing and must be safe. This is not the case.

Spot-On Pesticides such as Frontline, Zodiac, ProMeris, Defend, Bio Spot, Adams and Advantage trigger adverse reactions in dogs and cats, shorten life spans, cause terminal illness, and premature death. The active ingredients in these solutions include chemicals such as imidacloprid, fipronil, permethrin, methoprene, and pyriproxyfen, all of which have caused serious health problems in animals in laboratories.

Even some of the inert ingredients can be hazardous to your animal's health. Other forms of flea control powders, collars, and sprays are no less dangerous to you or your animals. Labels may warn not to get these substances on your skin, to wash your hands after applying it, and to keep it away from children, yet these chemicals are absorbed by your animal's skin.

Immediate effects of pesticide overdose include vomiting, diarrhoea, trembling, seizures, and respiratory problems.

## Recommendations for Flea Treatment

Here at The Blue Ridge Barn we recommend two natural products for the treatment of fleas. The first is a shampoo available from Dog Health <http://www.doghealth.co.uk> called Dynamite and the other is Diatomaceous Earth available from Wiggly Wigglers <http://www.wigglywigglers.co.uk>

### Dynamite Shampoo and Grooming Spray

Bath your dog three times at ten day intervals using Dynamite shampoo. Dynamite is a leading herbal protection against fleas. Dynamite has revolutionised flea control for dog and bird owners by offering an alternative to insecticidal products. One bottle of concentrate makes 25 litres of repellent, which can be used either as a final rinse after shampoo or as a grooming spray. Dynamite will protect against fleas, mite, ticks and lice, and can also be used for personal protection against midges, mosquitoes etc. The lanolin in Dynamite will also help maintain the quality of the coat.

**Diatomaceous Earth** (or D.E. for short), is a big name for an amazing product with a long, long list of uses. DE is the fossilised remains of countless millions of microscopically tiny unicellular plants, called diatoms that live in every sea and lake. DE powder is produced by grinding DE bearing rock into a fine, white powder that is used around the world to undertake all sorts of tasks from purifying water to polishing metal!

DE is a special food grade version called CelTix and is designed to help control parasite infestations, keep animal bedding fresh and odour free and as an animal feed additive.

Although these may seem very different problems they can all be solved in the same way: by absorption. The intricately woven shells of the diatoms in the powder act as a super sponge, soaking up huge amounts of water and oils and their associated smells. Parasites cannot cope with BE powder, it sucks the liquids and lipids from their skin causing them to dehydrate and die.

Please note that some vets routinely treat for fleas (whether they are present or not), at 8 or 10 weeks when puppies are vaccinated. Based on feedback The Blue Ridge Barn strongly advise against this. If you must use Spot-On Pesticides such as Frontline, Zodiac, ProMeris, Defend, Bio Spot, Adams and Advantage do not use within two weeks of puppy vaccination or worming treatment.

**Recommendations for Tick Treatment** (Information from <http://www.bada-uk.org>)

How a tick is removed is extremely important. Incorrect removal can result in:

- The tick's mouth parts being left behind in the skin
- Compression of the tick's abdomen
- Puncture of the tick's body
- Injury and stress to the tick

These in turn can result in localised infection from foreign bodies and the introduction of infective organisms from the tick's stomach contents and saliva.

Leaving behind the tick's mouth parts can result in septic abscesses which, in severe cases, can lead to septicaemia.

Compressing the tick's abdomen can cause its stomach contents to be squeezed back into the blood stream of its host.

Puncturing the body of the tick can spill its stomach contents, which may contain infective organisms.

Causing injury or stress to the tick can result in it regurgitating the blood meal that it has ingested. This may contain infective organisms and result in the host contracting a serious infection/s.

Stress to the tick can result from applying solutions such as alcohol, aftershave, oils / butter, paraffin or petroleum jelly. It can also result from applying a freezing agent or burning the tick with a cigarette, lighter, or match head.

These methods might be successful in getting a tick to release its grip, but they can also significantly increase the chances of disease transmission.

**For Tick Removal** The Blue Ridge Barn recommends the O'Tom Tick Removal Tool, see our Dogs and Puppies/Health section to buy.

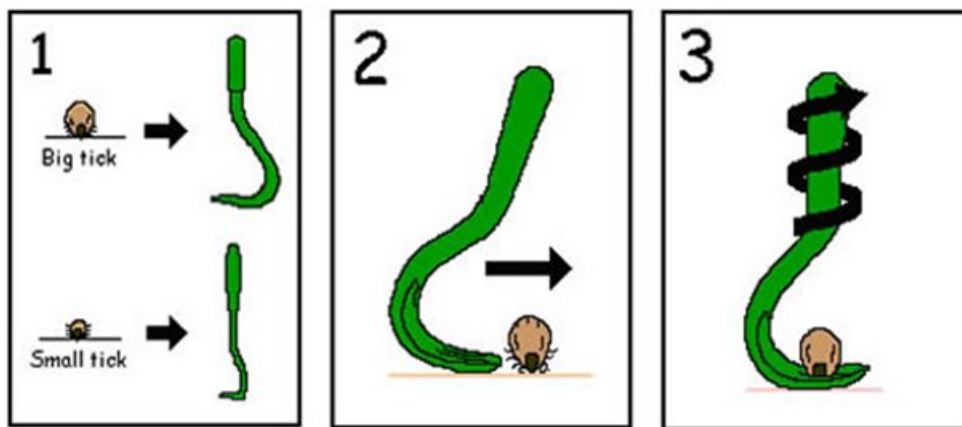
### **Tick Removal Instructions**

Ideally, wear rubber / plastic gloves or, in the absence of gloves, shield fingers with tissue or paper.

1. Choose the most suitable O'Tom Tick Twister hook, according to the size of the tick (each pack contains two sizes, one for adult ticks and one for the tiny nymph ticks).
2. Engage the hook by approaching the tick from the side (the body of the tick is flat) until it is held securely.

3. Lift the hook very lightly and TURN IT (screwing or unscrewing). The tick detaches itself after 2-3 rotations.
4. After removing the tick, disinfect the bite site and wash hands with soap and water.
5. Save the tick for identification in case you become ill within several weeks. Write the date of the bite in pencil on a piece of paper and put it with the tick in a sealed plastic bag and store it in a freezer. Your doctor can use the information to assist in making an accurate diagnosis. Although not every tick carries Borreliosis or any of the associated co-infections, immediate removal of an attached tick is recommended.

**DO NOT** use petroleum jelly, any liquid solutions, or freeze / burn the tick, as this will stimulate it to regurgitate its stomach contents, increasing the chance of infection.



You will find a link to a very helpful demonstration video here [O'Tom Tick Twister Official Video - YouTube](#)

An essential item for your pet's medicine box!