

How to deal with the tick and flea season

It can happen to you, your pet, and your home. Fleas and ticks can silently invite themselves onto your pet and invade your home. These pets then harm you and your pet, making your home a lot less comfortable. So, how do you protect your family from unwelcome guests? By understanding fleas and ticks and how they can affect your pet's health, allows you to address current problems and prevent future disasters.

Vet tips
Dr. Sara White



Excessive scratching and chewing may be the first sign that your pet has an annoying flea problem. Usually this is only the tip of the iceberg, indicating larger health issues. Fleas will cause a wide range of diseases that deprive your pet of energy and affect their overall quality of life. Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD) is an allergy to flea bites. FAD will cause excessive biting and scratching around the tail, groin, back and neck producing bleeding sores when severe. Anemia is when red blood cells are depleted by the fleas feeding on your pet's blood. Anemia results in pale gums, weakness, and lethargy. Fleas are carriers of tapeworms. Tapeworm segments can sometimes be seen around the anus (dried rice) and cause intense anal itching. Fleas are known for carrying Rickettsiosis, Plague, and Cat Scratch Disease, all of which can be passed on to humans.

Fleas live on your pet, biting them and feeding on their blood. One female flea can lay up to 50 eggs per day and over 2,000 eggs in her lifetime. One adult flea could lead to tens of thousands of fleas! An infected pet acts as a "salt-shaker" scattering flea eggs wherever it goes! Flea eggs in the environment hatch into larvae in as little as 1 day. Larvae move away from light, deep into carpets and cracks in flooring where they feed before spinning themselves a cocoon and becoming a pupa, which is almost indestructible. New adult fleas in their protective cocoons lie in wait for the next available blood meal — either a pet or even a human! People or pets walking near flea pupae provide stimuli such as warmth or carbon dioxide in exhaled breath which signal the waiting flea to hatch and jump.

There are 4 main ways to treat flea infestation. First, kill adult fleas that are already on the pet. Second, kill newly arriving adult fleas on the pet. It may take 3 or 4 months to kill all the fleas emerging from the pupae in the household. Third, prevent further infestation of the home by preventing the development of larvae into adult fleas. Last, clear the home and environment of flea eggs, larvae, and pupae that are already there. Points 1, 2, and 3 can all be achieved by treating your pet with Activyl or Bravecto available at your veterinarian's office.

When you discover fleas on your pet, your home is probably already part of the problem. Vacuum your home frequently (daily), especially carpets and other soft covering where your pets tend to lounge. Don't forget your vehicle. Wash your pet's bed, blanket, toys and other soft items in the hottest water possible. Increase the temperature and humidity in your home to encourage the pupae to hatch into adult fleas. Take care of your yard, mow the lawn and rake up any clippings or leaves. Cats and dogs pick up newly hatched hungry adult fleas from an infested environment. Any area inhabited by other cats and dogs or wildlife, such as foxes, raccoons and opossums, may be infested with fleas. This can include houses, sheds, parks, gardens, and wooded areas.

Even if you treat your pets with Activyl or Bravecto year-around, the best idea is to check for fleas on your pet and in your home on a regular basis. When checking your pet for fleas, look for black specks (flea dirt) on your pet or its bedding. There are a few easy ways to perform a thorough flea check. Run a metal flea comb through your pet's coat making sure that you touch the skin below. If the comb gathers black specks you may have found flea dirt! To check the black specks, place them on a white paper towel and drip a small amount of warm water on the specks. If they are dirt, they will stay black-brown. If they are flea dirt, they will dissolve into a red spot. Another method requires a white paper towel beneath your pet. Rub your hands firmly through your pet's fur. If black speck fall to the towel, it may be flea dirt. Check as described above. An easy way to check your carpet at home is to take a warm damp white towel and lay it on your carpet. Wait 30-60 seconds and peel the towel back. If there are black jumping bugs on the towel, most likely you have fleas living in your carpets!

Points to remember: If left undisturbed, pupae can exist for many months in the environment, which is why regular year-around flea treatment is so important in ridding an environment and home of an infestation. Treat all your cats and dogs year-around. Some pets are good at masking the signs of a flea infestation, but if one animal is infested, all pets in the household will be! To be continued...more in my next article.



Baking and churning for a cause

Call it reverse psychology, over-exposure or maximum sensory overload, I don't care. All I know is that after a weekend of baking four Texas sheet cakes, five angel food cakes and churning about 18 gallons of homemade ice cream I didn't even want to eat any of it.

The annual ice cream social fundraiser for the non-profit organization Jim and I help with was Sunday afternoon. So, beginning about 5 a.m. Saturday morning I started baking. Oh, did I forget to mention that our air conditioner went out. That's why I wanted to start so early; to beat the heat.

I have four sheet cake pans, that's why four batches of the glorified brownies. It only takes about 30 minutes each from mixing to frosting, so in an hour those were all done and cooling. Angel food cake is another matter. Now, don't give me too much credit here, because I did use mixes. Even at that I only had one tube pan and each cake has to bake about 45 minutes, then cool before removing it from the pan. I have a double oven and hated to see one set idle when I could be getting two baked at the same time. Multitasking: that's what I'm all about. So

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



while the first angel food cake was in the oven and with a timer in my pocket, I headed to our storage unit down the street to find the other tube pan I knew I had. After mining through a few boxes I found it. Back to the kitchen and soon two cakes were baking at the same time.

By late afternoon I was in the facility where the fundraiser was to be held. One of the other board members came to help and soon we had an assembly line going of mixing the ingredients for each batch of ice cream, cooking it and then storing it in the refrigerator, ready for the next day.

After church out in the country, I headed straight to the facility to start churning while Jim attended services at our town church. With two borrowed freezers, plus our two, it wasn't long before all four were churning away. I

probably looked like the guy on the Ed Sullivan Show that kept all the plates spinning on sticks. I was constantly moving from one freezer to another; adding ice or sprinkling salt. Just as soon as one would shut down, I would pull the canister out, dump the freezing brine into a five-gallon bucket, pack the soft ice cream into a plastic container, stow it in the freezer, grab another batch of the mix, pour it into the now-empty canister, reposition it in the freezer bucket with the motor, plug it in, pour most of the brine water down the drain and pour the ice back in around the canister. It was really fun when two or three motors would pull down at the same time.

The good news is that all the ice cream was done before our first guests arrived. The volunteer greeters, servers and cleaner-uppers pitched in and everything went off like clock-work. Many guests came back for seconds (and thirds) so I guess it all tasted OK. And here's the point I started to make. After preparing it, I didn't eat any of it. Honestly, it didn't even sound good. In a day or two, I may taste some of the left overs. But not today. It's just too soon.

Savoring the fruits of your labor

Now that gardens across Kansas are bearing vegetables, it's time to taste, enjoy and appreciate the fruits of our labor.

It seems like just a few short weeks ago folks walked to the machine shop, shed or garage and plucked a spade out of one of the dark corners and headed for the garden plot. Now that our home-grown produce is ready, it's a real treat to pick armloads of radishes, potatoes, tomatoes and cucumbers.

The tomatoes my mother grew remain the best I've ever eaten. Hot days coupled with cool nights, low humidity and 180 degrees of sunlight ensured these tomatoes tasted terrific. The wonderful, rich sandy loam soil of northwestern Kansas where I grew up played a part as well.

Every winter Mom started each tomato plant from seeds from her mother's garden — talk about heirloom tomatoes. Talk about flavor.

While texture, variety and acidity are all paramount, for me the litmus test of a terrific tomato is the amount of juice within. It's also the amount of juice left in the serving bowl once the tomatoes are gone. As kids, we'd wrestle every meal to see who drank the juice out of the bowl.

Insight
John Schlageck



In the late '50s and '60s, fresh produce wasn't as plentiful as today. Families grew many of the foods they ate. Some couldn't afford to go to the store and buy fresh fruits and vegetables.

Today, while most people can afford to buy all their produce, some would still rather grow their own.

One of the main reason people choose to do so is because home-grown fruits and vegetables taste better when their picked fresh off the vine. There's also nothing more satisfying than to walk out to your own garden, gather a handful of onions or radishes and head for the kitchen

Another thing folks are discovering is how good foods taste raw. If you don't believe me, just bite into a fresh carrot, radish or slice up a cool, refreshing cucumber and slip it into your mouth. The proof is in the tasting.

Some of us were born with a sweet

tooth. I'm one. Fresh fruit, ice cream and chocolates are my favorites. If you've ever picked strawberries, and sprinkled them on a heaping bowl of vanilla ice cream, you know what I'm talking about. Sometime popping a few fresh strawberries ripe from the vine into your mouth is even better.

When I was a kid, Dad always planted sweet corn. We called them roasting ears. Corn pulled fresh from the stalk, steamed or grilled and spread thick with butter — hey someone bring me a napkin please, I'm drooling.

For those of us concerned about saving energy, eating our fruits and vegetables fresh out of the garden could be another alternative. Once you acquire a taste for fresh produce, it's nearly impossible to go back to cooking the bejesus out of your fruits and veggies.

So the next time you're out working in your garden this summer and sweat begins to drip down your face, remember all those wonderful, fresh berries, peppers, radishes and tomatoes you'll soon eat on your own table. Harvesting the fruits of your own labor will be worth it.

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