

**TREATMENT FOR FLEAS, TICKS AND WORMS**

This month we are seeing an increasing number of pets troubled with fleas and ticks and worms. These parasites are present year round but are found in much greater numbers during warmer weather because they can reproduce very rapidly.

At this time of year it takes just a few weeks for one flea to become many thousands and infest not just the pet but also the house it lives in. Flea bites can cause severe irritation to pets resulting in extensive damage and infection of the skin.

Animal fleas will bite humans resulting in red itchy spots usually on the legs. There are various spot-on preparations available to kill fleas; ones available from your vet are likely to be the most effective. The latest product to be developed is a combined flea and worm treatment for dogs and we find this suits many of our clients.

Ticks are small blood sucking parasites that generally inhabit woodland or long grass waiting for a passing host. They sit on the end of fronds of vegetation with their legs outstretched so that when a dog or cat walks past they will attach to the fur, usually around the head and neck. They crawl down to the skin and bite, their mouth parts becoming cemented into the skin, so that they can start feeding.

Over a period of a few days they fill up with blood, their body swells to many times its original size and then when they are full will drop off. Tick bites can cause a nasty reaction; many pets will develop a firm ulcerated red lump at the site of a bite which can become infected. Ticks are difficult to pull off once they are attached and if they are not removed correctly their body can come away leaving the head still embedded in the skin.

In warmer countries ticks transmit some serious diseases which can be a risk for pets travelling abroad. A product has been recently launched in the UK which is particularly useful for these travelling pets. This spot-on preparation will kill fleas, ticks and also repels some of the biting flies which can transmit serious disease in warmer climates.

The main way cats get infested with worms is by hunting or by having fleas. Intermediate life stages of the tapeworm are present in rodents and fleas and when a cat eats these, as a result of hunting or grooming, they can become infected with a tapeworm.

A cat that is infected will shed segments of tapeworm from its rear end and these look like grains of rice stuck to the fur. Adult and especially kittens are also prone to becoming infested with roundworms – which are long and thin and look like spaghetti.

We are very pleased that a new product has come on the market which enables owners to worm their cats using a spot-on preparation. This will treat all types of worm infestation just as reliably as a tablet and of course is much easier to administer – we have some very relieved cat owners (and cats) since this product has become available.

If anyone would like further information on this or any veterinary matter then please give us a call on 01256 764771.