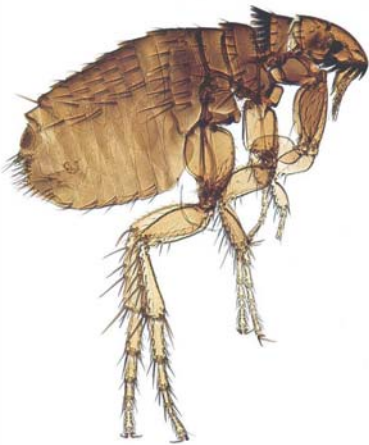


During spring & summer all pets are particularly susceptible to a wide variety of parasites.

Fleas

Fleas are the most common cause of itching in dogs and cats. They tend to be more of a problem in the summer, but with our warm, centrally heated houses, they will continue to breed year round and can be a problem through the winter too.



Fleas are dark brown wingless insects, a few mm long and visible to the naked eye. Adult fleas are blood suckers and parasitic; that is to say they feed off other animals.

The adult fleas lay eggs which fall to the ground. These then hatch into maggot like larvae two days to two weeks later depending on the

temperature of the environment; the warmer it is the quicker they hatch. These larvae live in the environment; carpet, floorboards, bedding, feeding on any organic debris including the faeces of the adult fleas. This contains blood from the adult fleas feeding on the animal host.

The larvae pupate in the environment for a varying length of time before hatching as adult fleas and infesting a host

animal. A flea population is unevenly distributed; 50% as eggs, 35% larvae, 10% pupae and 5% adults.

Their total life cycle can take as little as two weeks, but may be lengthened to many months if conditions are favorable. This is due to the fact that pupated larvae can remain pupated for up to six months. Female fleas can lay 500 or more eggs over their life, allowing for phenomenal increases in the population.



This life cycle means that most of the flea population is not adult and therefore not visible on the cats and dogs. Treating fleas needs to be aimed at the different life stages; treatment should target both the environment and the pet.

There are many flea products available, both as spot on treatments for treating fleas on your pets, and sprays for treating the house. As these products can vary widely in their efficacy, the way they work and cost, we advise that you bring your animals in to the clinic to speak to a vet or nurse. Then we will be able to evaluate your pet's health and your family's requirements and advise you on flea control regime suitable for you.

IMPORTANT Are you using the correct flea treatment for your cat?

There has been an increase in the number of poisoning cases in cats caused by the use of certain 'spot-on' treatments designed for dogs. Certain insecticides that are used in some of these dog 'spot-ons' are very toxic to cats and can cause seizures and possibly death.

It is vital that any flea treatments bought from supermarkets or pet-shops be specifically for cat use. If you have any concerns or questions please call us on 01256 764771, or come in to talk to one of our team.

Grass ticks

If your pet has access to long grass, it is always wise to check them over regularly for the presence of ticks. These are small, blood-sucking mites that live on blood from larger animals, like deer.

The tick sits on tall grass and trees, waiting for a possible 'host' to walk by. If a tick attaches itself to your pet, it will typically find its way to a warm, moist, dark place on the body like in the ear, under the chin or between their legs and body. It will then insert a probe into the skin and begin sucking blood. In most cases the tick will leave after a while with no harm having been done. Occasionally, the tick carries a bacterial infection that can cause Lyme disease. Signs include lameness, fever, loss of appetite, fatigue and enlargement of the lymph nodes. The signs of Lyme disease often resolve quickly with antibiotics.



Other things to look out for during Spring and Summer are:

Algae



If your dog likes swimming, then avoid ponds where algae is growing. Some types produce toxins that can be irritants, or even lethally poisonous. And, although most dogs like water, not all dogs are good swimmers! If your pet has been in a "near drowning" situation, you should see a vet, as complications can develop if they have inhaled water.

Heatstroke

Dogs and other animals should never be left in cars in the summer, even if the windows are slightly open, as they can quickly develop heat stroke. Vigorous play on a hot day can also be enough to bring it on, especially in short nosed breeds and in pets that are overweight.

Grass seeds

Grass seeds – those that look like barley ears – easily get into your dog's ears and stick in their feet. They can penetrate the skin and migrate around the body causing significant discomfort, sometimes large abscesses.

Check your dog after a walk and remove them. Trim feathered ears and paws so that long hairs do not trap seeds.

