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Creepy, Crawly Things

Without a doubt, parasite control is one of the most important and commonly overlooked health management concerns for our pets. Parasites are responsible for a wide variety of health problems, from painful skin infections, itching and irritation caused by fleas and mites, to chronic gastrointestinal disease, heart and lung disease, and serious infectious diseases such as Lyme and Ehrlichia. The following information, along with advice from your veterinarian, will help keep you, your pets, and your home free from these unwelcome guests.

Intestinal parasites can be spread through ingestion of contaminated feces, insects and rodents, and directly from mothers to their young. Some are contagious to humans. Roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, tapeworms, giardia, and coccidian are prevalent in our area and can be identified and controlled through routine fecal exams, periodic deworming, and the use of certain heartworm preventatives that also control intestinal worms. Cleaning up after your dog can greatly reduce the risk of spreading intestinal parasites. We also routinely deworm puppies and kittens for intestinal parasites they often obtain from their moms.

Heartworms are blood parasites that are transmitted through the bite of infected mosquitoes. Left untreated, these worms can clog up blood vessels and heart chambers, causing serious heart and lung disease and even death. This parasite can affect both cats and dogs. Sentinel, Revolution, and Heartgard and generic equivalents are safe and effective and should be used monthly to prevent heartworm infection. At Del Ray Animal Hospital we recommend year round prevention for dogs and outdoor cats and annual blood tests for dogs.

There are many products on the market today to help control fleas and ticks. Your choice of products will be dictated by your pet's lifestyle, safety, efficacy, costs, and your veterinarian's recommendations. Some products may work well for some pets and not so well for others. We recommend using preventative at least from May-December and year round if ticks are a concern.

Over the years, it appears that fleas have developed resistance to several products. Fipronil (in Frontline Plus) and Imidacloprid (in Advantage) have lost their effectiveness for fleas

Most “spot on” over-the-counter products contain a combination of Permethrins and Insect Growth Regulators (IGRs). Many fleas have developed resistance to Permethrins and some of these products are extremely toxic to cats. Read labels carefully and never use a dog product on a cat.

Our Products:

Sentinel (Lufenuron) is a heartworm prevention that also prevents flea reproduction by inhibiting development of flea eggs and larvae. It also prevents the intestinal parasites hookworms, roundworms and whipworms. However, it does not kill or repel fleas and will not prevent flea bite allergy or the spread of infectious diseases. It does not control ticks. It is given once a month, by mouth. We recommend using it all year round with a topical or oral flea product that kills fleas.

Nexgard (Afoxolaner) is an oral monthly flea and tick preventative for dogs only. It is used in dogs older than 8 weeks of age. It has the fastest kill of all the products on the market and has been proven to prevent the spread of tick borne diseases.

Vectra 3D is a topical flea and tick preventative for dogs applied once a month that also has repellent properties for fleas, ticks and mosquitoes. It is not safe for cats and is not recommended for dogs that may snuggle with cats.

Seresto is a collar for dogs and cats that kills and repels fleas and ticks for up to eight months due to its slow release properties. It must be worn snug around the neck and has a breakaway feature. It can be worn in the water but this will reduce the length of time that it is effective. If your dog is bathed or swims, we recommend a new collar every six months instead of the typical eight months. This is the most cost effective flea and tick treatment option.

Revolution (Selamectin) can be used monthly on dogs and cats. It kills adult fleas, prevents heartworms and certain intestinal parasites, ear and scabies mites, prevents fleas from hatching, and controls ticks on dogs. It is applied topically and is absorbed through the skin and redistributed to various organs. It is safe for pets 6 weeks and older and is our preferred treatment for outdoor cats

Catego is a newer topical flea product safe and effective for cats. It is applied to the skin monthly.

Other products:

Capstar (Nitenpyram) is a pill given orally that provides a one-time kill of adult fleas within 3-4 hours of dosing. It can be used in combination with other products and does not repel adult fleas. Owners concerned about pesticide residue may prefer this product.

Comfortis (Spinosad) is an oral monthly flea preventative that has largely been replaced by Nexgard since it also prevents ticks.

Trifexis is a combination of Sentinel and Comfortis that we usually do not recommend due to the high incidence of vomiting.

Insect growth regulators such as Methoprene and Pyriproxyfen target eggs and larvae and can be found in products used to treat the home as well as products used on your pet. These products break the flea life cycle but do not kill adults.

All topical medications can be affected by bathing or wetting though some are more water resistant than others. As flea populations develop resistance, we will most certainly see new products appear on the market and our recommendations for treatment may eventually change.

Give us a call if you have any questions about developing an integrated parasite control program that will keep you and your pets healthy and happy.