Protecting Your Pet: Fleas, Ticks and Mosquitoes

Spending time outdoors can benefit your pet while also exposing them to fleas, ticks and mosquitoes, which can cause discomfort and spread disease.

This guide provides general information and is not a substitute for veterinary care. If your pet needs preventative treatment or has been exposed, consult your veterinarian.

FLEAS

- Fleas are tiny, dark bugs that jump onto animals to feed. Signs include excessive scratching, red skin, clusters of bites and flea dirt (dark specks) in their fur.
- Prevent fleas with topical and/or oral flea-tick preventatives from your veterinarian. Fleas can survive indoors year-round, so regular preventative treatments are important.
- Flea treatment can include over-the-counter flea shampoo or prescription medications from your veterinarian.
- If your pet has fleas, wash all pet care items, bedding and grooming products in hot water, vacuum thoroughly and treat all animals in the home, as fleas spread easily.

TICKS

- Ticks are small spider-like parasites found in bushes, tall grass and shrubs, and will bite and latch onto animals passing by.
- Look for attached ticks, raised bumps and redness on your pet. If they develop lethargy, fever, lameness or loss of appetite, contact your veterinarian immediately.

- Tick and flea preventatives are often combined. Oral and topical tick medications should be prescribed by a veterinarian who can consider your pet's size, age and health.
- After spending time outside, check your pet's entire body, especially warm, hidden areas like under their legs, between the toes, and around their ears, eyes and tail.
- If you find a tick, wear disposable gloves and use tweezers to grip the tick as close to skin as possible, then pull straight out with even pressure. Wash the area with soap and water.

- Photograph the tick, store it in a clean, sealed plastic container, and submit it to etick.ca for Alberta's tick surveillance program to assess it.

MOSQUITOES

- Mosquitoes can bite pets and leave itchy, raised red bumps.
- Some flea-tick preventatives also repel mosquitoes. Ask your veterinarian which product is right for your pet.
- Only use mosquito repellents marked as safe for pets.
- Help relieve bite irritation using a cool compress (ice pack or cooled wet towel) or apply a paste of baking soda mixed with water. Leave either treatment on for 10 minutes, then remove.

PREVENTION

- Use parasite prevention year-round. Speak with your veterinarian to find the treatment that best fits your pet and household.
- Use only pet-safe repellents recommended by a veterinarian.
- Check your pet after spending time outside for signs of bugs or bites.
- Avoid tall grass and standing water where parasites are likely to be.
- Eliminate standing water around your home, including buckets, plant pots and bird baths where mosquitoes may be breeding.

THINGS TO AVOID

- Products that are safe for dogs may not be safe for cats. Always read labels carefully and follow the advice of your veterinarian, especially if giving flea-tick preventatives to both cats and dogs in your home.
    - Dogs treated with products containing pyrethrin or permethrin should be separated from cats for at least one day, as these treatments are toxic to cats.
- **Never use DEET insect repellents** on pets, and don't allow pets to lick insect repellent applied to your skin.
- Essential oils can be toxic to your pet. Check with your veterinarian before using them.
- Citronella is toxic to pets, especially cats. Don't use citronella sprays on your pets and keep citronella products that can be ingested, like citronella candles, away from your pets.

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