

Flea, Tick, and Parasite Control

Some important information you should know....

- **Most pets have fleas and their owners do not realize it!** The best way to monitor for fleas is to buy a flea comb. This is a very inexpensive way to determine if your pet(s) have fleas, and if they do, to evaluate how well your treatment is working.
When you comb your pet, if you find ANY fleas or EVEN JUST little black dots, called "flea dirt", you have a flea problem! For every one flea you find on your pet, studies have shown there may be up to 100 more in your home.
- For flea and tick control to be effective, it must be administered throughout the entire flea season. We recommend treating *at least* 8 months out of the year, beginning in April and ending once there has been a heavy killing frost.
- Fleas are incredibly efficient reproducers. A single female flea can lay up to 50 eggs per day. The eggs they lay then fall and land in carpets or upholstery, and can remain dormant for up to 8 months. The average life cycle of the flea is 90 days, so if your pets have fleas, you will need to treat them for at least three consecutive months.
- Flea control is multifaceted. It should include once monthly treatments for **all your pets**, and vacuuming your floors and furniture on a regular basis. It is also important to wash your bedding, your pet's bedding, and toys. Flea eggs can hatch in vacuum bags and containers, so don't forget to change your bag and empty your container when you finish cleaning. If you do these things, using potentially harmful sprays and powders are usually not necessary.
- Even if your pet (s) are indoor only, fleas can still be carried inside your home by other pets who go outside, and also by us-on our clothing and footwear.
- In addition to causing discomfort to your pets, fleas, ticks and parasites can cause significant disease in people. Fleas infect your cats and dogs with tapeworms, which can be transmitted to people, particularly children. If your dog or cat has fleas, we recommend they also be treated for tapeworms. In cats, fleas also carry an organism called *Bartonella henselae* which is the cause of cat-scratch fever in humans. Ticks are the vector for several diseases, including but not limited to, Lyme Disease, which is now endemic in this area.
- Many animals are allergic to fleas, meaning that one fleabite can cause an allergic reaction. Pets that are allergic to fleas will lick and scratch their skin, causing it to become infected. These skin infections have to be treated in addition to using flea medication, which is an added expense to the owner.
- All flea medications fall into two basic categories: topical and oral. As a general rule, topical medications take longer to kill fleas, and therefore are less efficient than the newer oral medications. Topical medications are still effective for many pets, and are often cheaper, so we don't discourage their use, but recommend

monitoring how well they are working by routinely combing for fleas. Most topical products work much better if you begin them *before* you have a flea problem, and if you are finding any evidence of fleas, would encourage you to consider using an oral flea treatment.

- Appropriate flea treatments are listed below. Each of the flea treatments mentioned is effective for up to 30 days. In general flea baths, dips, and collars are not effective methods of treatments, because they kill only some of the adults, and offer no long-term protection. There are a wide variety of products available both over the counter and from your veterinarian. Many of these products include other medications that prevent infection from ticks, heartworm, and intestinal parasites.
- As a general rule, you usually need to use two products to adequately protect your outdoor pet from all of these organisms. Usually indoor pets only require protection against fleas. The following lists will help you choose the medications that are best for you and your animal (s).
 1. **Comfortis:** A relatively new treatment for fleas, this is an oral medication that kills most adult fleas within 4 hours of dosing. *This is the single best product for flea control and is approved for use in cats.* It can be safely used with Frontline Plus or Revolution, if these products alone are not controlling your flea problem. Prices for Comfortis range between \$14-18 per dose.
 2. **Trifexis-** Trifexis has the same active ingredient as Comfortis for flea control, but also includes a medication for heartworm, roundworm, hookworm and whipworm preventative for dogs. **Comfortis and Trifexis** are available by prescription only, so if we haven't seen your pet within a year, they will need an exam before this medication can be dispensed. Since **Trifexis** also includes a heartworm preventative, we recommend a **4DX** test be conducted on your dog, prior to starting Trifexis. The price of **Trifexis** ranges from ~\$18-22 per dose. Because Comfortis and Trifexis don't provide any tick protection, we recommend using them with **Frontline Plus, Activyl** or a **Scalibor Collar**.
 3. The **Scalibor Collar** is a newly approved tick band for dogs that is waterproof and provides protection for up to 6 months. It is not the same as the flea and tick collars sold over the counter in grocery and pet stores. The **Scalibor Collar** is ~ \$30.
 4. **Frontline Plus:** The most common and most popular treatment for fleas and ticks in dogs and cats. This is a topical medication and should be used in combination with **Heartguard** to prevent heartworm, roundworm, and hookworm infections in **dogs**. Veterinarians and other businesses now sell frontline over the counter, as well. It is also available in some generic preparations, such as Pet Armor.

5. **Activyl:** Activyl is a topical flea medication that has replaced Frontline Plus at our clinic. It provides flea and tick protection in **dogs** for up to 4 weeks, and **flea** protection in **cats** for up to 4 weeks. We have found it to be an effective flea medication.
6. **Revolution:** A more expensive topical medication than Frontline Plus, we recommend this treatment for cats-*especially outdoor cats*- for the treatment of fleas, ticks, ear mites, and some intestinal parasites. It is less ideal for dogs in this region, as it doesn't kill deer ticks, which transmit Lyme Disease.
7. **Advantage:** There are several formulations of Advantage, though none of them are sold here (ie Advantage Multi, Advantage II). Please read package labels carefully for differences in these products.
8. **Advantix-** Is a once a month topical medication for use in **dogs only** to repel and kill fleas, ticks, mosquitoes, biting flies and chewing lice. We do not carry this medication at LRVC. If you choose to use this product on your dog, please use extreme caution that it is NOT applied by mistake to a cat, or that your cat doesn't groom your dog, accidentally ingesting the medication. **If Advantix is applied to a cat, or if ingested, it can cause severe tremors, seizures and even death. Please call your veterinarian immediately if you think your cat may have been exposed to Advantix.**
9. **Heartguard Plus:** Heartguard Plus is a monthly preventative medication for dogs for heartworm, roundworm, and hookworm infestations. We recommend that a **4DX** test be conducted prior to starting Heartguard Plus or Trifexis medications.

- **Prices listed are approximations only. They do not include tax, and are subject to change.**