

## FLEAS AND TICKS

The tick is a small mite (spider family) while the flea is an insect; but these two bugs have at least one thing in common: they are parasites that will feed on your dog's blood.

Flea bites can sometimes go unseen on certain animals, cause a minor irritation on others and for some it will cause intense itching, redness, shedding and even ulcers associated with allergic dermatitis for those who are hypersensitive to flea saliva. Fleas can give some disease as well as some types of flatworms. Ticks, for their part, are "vectors" or carriers of a certain number of diseases like Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever, both transmittable to humans; however, it is not shown that cats are sensitive to these diseases. It happens, although very rarely, that a toxin present in tick saliva causes paralysis to the host animal.

### About fleas...

Adult fleas are insects with no wings, usually smaller than a sesame seed and that feeds on animals. Their back legs, which are disproportionately big compared to the others, allow them to do impressive leaps. Once they are hooked to your pet's fur using their nails, their stylet-shaped mouthparts pierce the skin to suck blood.

Females lay 30 to 50 eggs per day! These eggs fall on the ground within the 8 following hours and will hatch only two days later, freeing larvae that will hide in dark places sneaking in carpets or upholstery. After feeding for about one week on adult fleas' feces, crumbs and scales, for example, the larvae will form cocoons in which they will transform to pupae. Well hidden, they can survive very long and get out only when they perceive a dog's, a cat's or another animal's presence close. The cycle can last 12 to 180 days. Then it starts all over again.



### Ticks...

Ticks are creatures with no wings that, during three of their four phases, need animal blood to survive. They have an organ called "Hallers' organ" that can detect carbon dioxide, heat and other stimuli and allows them to localise the presence of an animal feeding source. When a host is close they will hook on to them, push their mouthparts into the animal and start sucking his blood.

If you find a tick, you have to get it off as soon as possible, because the longer it stays on, the more it can transmit diseases. However, do not touch it. Wear gloves, use tweezers to grip it the closest possible to your animal's skin and pull lightly until it lets go, throw it out in the toilet after wrapping it in multiple layers of toilet paper, avoid crushing, burning or asphyxiating it because you could liberate pathogenic bacteria.



### Fleas and prevention

Prevention stays the best way to fight fleas.

Many products are available at your veterinarian, offered either in topical application or oral administration. New insecticides and insect growth regulators not only eliminate the present fleas but steadily prevent a new infestation from happening. In fact, they destroy parasite before they are able to reproduce or by blocking eggs from getting to maturity. Ask your veterinarian to recommend a good product for your animal. Some products are also effective on ticks. These treatments must be accompanied by a daily examination of your pet's fur and destruction of ticks that may be there. Ask your veterinarian about the infestation degree in your region.

### **My dog has fleas**

It is recommended to use veterinary products because they are safer. The treatment consists in giving an oral medication that kills adults in 20 minutes then a second treatment, a topical application, once a month during six months. Environmental treatment consists in vacuuming and throwing out the bag in the garbage or burning it. You have to remember that the fleas and ticks must have completely absorbed the product to feel the effects which can take a couple of hours or days.