

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Summer Fun Without Pesky Fleas**

Warm weather means fun in the sun, but it also means that we will soon see a growing population of fleas. Although pets can get fleas any time of the year, spring and summer are often the worst times of year for these blood-sucking parasites. Besides making your pet miserable and itchy, fleas carry diseases such as plague, tularemia, and feline infectious anemia. In addition, certain tapeworm species are carried by fleas. They can also cause life-threatening anemia in young and debilitated animals. Many dogs and cats are severely allergic to fleas, too.

Preventing a flea problem is much kinder to your pet, easier to do, and less expensive than treating an outbreak. Fleas on your pet can be prevented and killed by using a topical medication or pill. Even indoor cats and dogs should receive a monthly preventative, as fleas can hitchhike on you or a visitor and you can track the eggs in from outside.

Your veterinarian can recommend a flea product for your pet. It is important to talk to your veterinarian before using any over the counter flea products. Many older products are hazardous to people and pets. Cats are especially sensitive to many over the counter topical products. Flea collars are hazardous to cats as studies have shown that cats that wear flea collars are more likely to develop cancer in their mouths from ingestion of the chemicals when they groom themselves.

How do you know if your pet already has fleas? You may not see them at all, especially if your pet is extremely allergic (they lick and chew them off) or if there aren't many fleas present (yet). Look for black sand like material on your pet's skin, especially found from the rib cage back. Comb a bit of it out, put it on a paper towel and place a drop of water on it. If it turns red, that is "flea dirt"- the digested blood the fleas have sucked from your pet- and you've got a flea problem.

It's critical to understand the flea life cycle in order to eradicate them. Once adult fleas jump onto our pets, they begin reproducing within 24 hours. A single flea can produce 2,000 eggs in her lifetime. These eggs hatch in as little as 5 days and the ones that don't hatch immediately can stay dormant for up to 5 months. This is pertinent because only 5% of the fleas in the environment are on your pet! These are the adults you can see-- the

remaining 95% are microscopic eggs and larvae that are in the carpet, bedding, hardwood floors, and organic litter in the yard. This means that if you only treat your pet for one month, you are not addressing the much bigger problem of all of those immature fleas in the environment.

Fleas can be treated with a topical product or pill. Your veterinarian, who knows your pet, will help you decide which product is best. These products must be used for a minimum of 3-6 months (most veterinarians recommend year-round protection) to break the life cycle and prevent new infestations. Use flea area treatments that contain insect growth regulators as a means of destroying the eggs and larvae in your home. Also vacuum well and wash bedding frequently. Remember, you must treat ALL pets in the household, monthly, as well as the environment or you will not solve the flea problem.

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*The Vermont Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA), founded in 1898, is a professional organization of 343 veterinarians dedicated to compassionate animal care and quality medicine. For more information, visit [www.vtvets.org](http://www.vtvets.org) or call (802) 878-6888.*