

Dealing with fleas ticks and other insects by Dr John Fudens HMC DVM PH

There are very few places on this planet that do not have insects which both animals and humans have to contend with. I can think of Arctic and Antarctic because of the cold but from what I understand even parts of those areas during their summer months have to deal with some aspects of insects. So how does a owner of animals deal with the problems and potential diseases carried by insects? In America our biggest animal insect problem for our pets are ticks and fleas. They are both a bother to animals and their human connections but also have health implications due to blood sucking and spread of diseases like Lyme. So there are basically 4 ways to handle and deal with this issue.

1. Do not have animals in your life. Yes this is not practicable or viable for people who love animals and want them in their life but still an option.
2. Use poisons and chemicals that are put into the blood stream of the animal by various methods that cause the insects to die and not reproduce when they bite and suck the animal's blood. The insects I am writing about are blood suckers so if the poison is in the blood and the insect ingests the blood it will eventually die and obviously not reproduce. This for the most part works but unfortunately the animal suffers by having these poisons in their system the consequences of being adversely affected by the poison and the allergic reactions that occur from insect bites. Then depending on the liver to rid those chemicals from the body. These poisons are given either by putting them on the skin to be absorbed into the blood or given by mouth for the same result. No matter the form of poison or administration of it they are still chemicals/poisons. Do not let anyone even a vet, other animal owner or drug rep tell you that the chemical floats on the surface of the skin and in the sweat of the animal so that is how it works. These are blood sucking insects and need blood to survive and nourish the eggs in the female.

The problem with using poisons besides the obvious is the insects have to be on the animals body to bite and suck the poisoned blood which then causes allergic reactions and dermatitis which then have to be treated by drugs or other natural methods if the owner does not want to use drugs. These methods of using poisons tend to be easy for owners to use but unfortunately the animals suffer. They also are not fool proof as they do not work all the time or in every case, One still has to deal with the allergic reactions and the poisons have to be given continuously every month or more often depending on where the animal lives in its environment. There is also the cost factor of the price of these poisons.

3. One can use diatomaceous earth which is a soft rock like material single celled plants of fresh and salt water origin. This is a natural product and is used in two basic ways. The commercial use is a filter for out pools and other water sources to help cleanse the water. The other is a noncommercial or natural form that is used in and on animals for parasite control. The natural form can be used mixed

in the feed for internal parasites in large animals. For the smaller domestic animals in our lives the product can be lightly dusted on the whole body every 1-2 weeks, sprinkled on the blankets/bedding they lay on or spread around the house in areas the insects inhabit. Fleas in particular need warmth, darkness and moisture for their survival besides blood. The product in the natural form is edible so there is no toxicity or harm in using it. DE works by the sharp points of the mineral puncturing the skeleton of the insects and allowing their body fluids to leak out. Basically suffocating the pests.

There is also another method of dealing with these insect pests and that is repelling them so they do not land on the animal and cause all their problems. There are two basic methods.

1. Using natural herbs or essential oils as a bath, spray or collar around the neck to try and form a body barrier to discourage the insects. Unfortunately these products are also not fool proof. The problem with collars is the collar is around the neck and the hope is the odor will get to the back end of the animal which is the area favored by fleas as it is more difficult for the dog or cat to get them. These insects may not have human intelligence but they have been around long before the dinosaurs so they must have some sort of high survival sense.
2. Using the so called electronic collars that emit an electromagnetic wave that is to bother the insects so much they find the animal wearing the collar to be unattractive.

When I was a conventional vet many years ago I used all of the above methods I wrote here to various success. All these products have pros and cons and it is up to the human owner to decide which to use mainly by a trial and error method. Of course a lot depends on the environment or area of the country where the animal lives. The continuous warm and moist areas have a higher problem level compared to areas that have an extended winter season.

As an aside and a general rule having your pet companion in the highest degree of health and free of as much chronic degenerative disease all life forms have is a huge step in not dealing with insects. Remember insects are parasites and the definition of parasites is "that which feeds on and inhabits the weak". So feeding your pets raw or human grade diets, keeping them away from the vets with the drugs and vaccines and keeping yourselves healthy goes a long way to having healthy animals. Yes the animals pick up both our positive and negative energy. Do not think so? Then why do we have them in our lives but to enjoy and savor their love and attention towards us.