

# CRITTER KEEPER

*Willamette Valley Animal Hospital*



## The Differences In Flea Control Products

**F**leas are not something that will disappear from a cat or dog without help. In fact, ignoring a flea problem can quickly lead to an infestation. Female fleas begin laying eggs on a cat or dog within 24 hours, which then fall off and land on sleeping areas in your home, the carpet and the ground outside. Once the larvae hatch, they remain inactive in a cocoon for weeks. Unsuspecting pet owners may think the problem is resolved after killing the adult fleas, but the life cycle will repeat weeks later unless eggs and larvae are prevented from maturing into adult fleas.

### Topical and oral flea control treatments are most effective

Fleas aren't simply a pesky parasite -- they can affect the health of their host dog or cat. When a large number of fleas are present, the blood loss to the animal can be life threatening. Often the flea saliva triggers allergies, and the itching and scratching that ensue can lead to a more serious skin infection. Additionally, pets can contract tapeworms from infected fleas. If you notice your pet scratching, check the skin for a dark brown bug about the size of a sesame seed. If you spot fleas, the first course of action should be to

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## Super Savings

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## Wellness Plans

contact a veterinarian for advice on treatment.

To provide immediate relief, your vet may recommend a monthly topical treatment (also called spot-on products) or an oral medication to stop adult

fleas from biting and to kill them within hours or days. Topical treatments are squeezed out of a tube and applied between the pet's shoulders. With some products, the chemical is stored in the oil glands under the animal's skin, and then distributed continuously to its skin and hair. Other products available, like Revolution, are not a pesticide but an FDA approved medication that works systemically (in the blood stream) so the fleas actually ingest the medication. Oral medications are often preferred in hot, humid climates that require year-round flea control or in households with children or multiple pets that shouldn't come in contact with a topical treatment until it dries.

A second approach to flea control is products that contain insect growth regulators (IGRs), which prevent eggs from hatching and larvae from maturing into adult fleas. Products with an IGR can be used to prevent the development of a serious flea problem (should adult fleas crawl onto your pet, the eggs they lay will be sterile) or to prevent a re-infestation on a pet



that was recently treated for a flea problem. Some topical flea control products contain both types of flea fighters, but oral products usually contain one or the other.

In researching this report, we found useful information at [VeterinaryPartner.com](http://VeterinaryPartner.com), a resource for the veterinarian industry.

This site has an article by vet Carol Foil, which explains the pros and cons of each product and identifies the ideal circumstances for each. (see table on page 3 for a similar comparison) An informative blog entry by Eric Barchas at [Dogster.com](http://Dogster.com) is also a must read; it gives an assessment of topical treatments, oral medications and other flea control products from his 10 years working as a vet.

Elsewhere, we found reviews of flea control products at a few veterinary websites. At [DrLarryPetVet.com](http://DrLarryPetVet.com), veterinarian Larry Cohen describes the pros and cons of Advantage, Frontline Top Spot and Revolution topical flea treatments. We don't know who authored a lengthy article at [PlacervilleVet.com](http://PlacervilleVet.com), but it provides a good description of each of the most popular products and explains why some are better than others. A vet at Main Street Pet Care in Joplin, Mo., gives recommendations for the best choices for preventing fleas or

eliminating an existing problem.

Pet owners who are concerned about the ingredients in topical flea treatments can find answers at the directory of flea products at [SimpleSteps.org](http://SimpleSteps.org), which is sponsored by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), an environmental action group. Here, flea products are assigned a risk level rating of one to three paws (with one being the lowest level of toxicity). Overall, oral flea medications have a lower risk rating than topical treatments.

We also found a large number of reviews of topical and oral flea products by pet owners at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and online retailers of pet supplies, including [Petco.com](http://Petco.com), the 1-800-PetMeds website and [PetSmart.com](http://PetSmart.com). Keep in mind that these sites are trying to sell you a product!

We found very few reviews by pet owners for flea collars and shampoos. We did, however, see mention of them not

working or causing neck fur to fall out in reviews of other flea products. The best source of flea shampoo information was at [All-Pets-Info.com](http://All-Pets-Info.com). This online resource for pet information recommends two flea shampoos.

### **Flea control products with limited effectiveness**

If you spot fleas on your pet, your first thought might be to use a flea control shampoo, dip, spray or powder to kill them. According to vet Carol Foil, "Shampoos are less effective



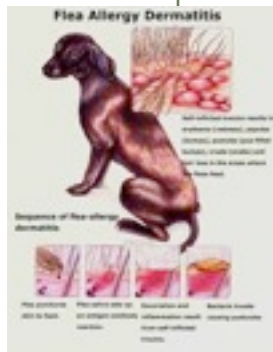
than sprays, dips or spot-ons because they have little residual activity."



This means that other fleas in the

environment can still crawl onto the pet and begin feeding and laying eggs. Although these products may be a first line of defense to stop fleas from biting and give your pet immediate relief, a topical or oral medication or treating the environment is often necessary to prevent reemergence of fleas.

Experts and owners agree that flea collars are largely ineffective at eliminating fleas compared to topical and oral flea control



treatments; therefore, we don't include a flea collar in our comparison. Furthermore, the NRDC conducted a study on the toxicity of flea collars and found elevated neurological and cancer risks to humans. After dogs and cats wore flea collars treated with tetrachlorvinphos or propoxur for two weeks, a laboratory tested residue levels on the animals' fur. The findings reveal half to three-quarters of the pets had "enough residue on their fur to pose significant neurological risks for toddlers who spend about two hours per day with their pet." The study also found a cancer risk "50 to 500 times greater than what the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers acceptable" in adults and an even higher risk for children.

<http://www.consumersearch.com/flea-control/review>  
Content edited

# YOUR IDEA -HERE- COULD PAY YOU CASH

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AND LAYOUT IDEAS TO  
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	Advantage 2	Advantage Multi	Frontline Plus	Capstar	Comfortis	Trifexis	Revolution	Advantix	Vectra 3D	Program	Sentinel	Frontline Top Spot	Promeris
Oral or Topical	Topical	Topical	Topical	Oral	Oral	Oral	Topical	Topical	Topical	Topical	Oral	Topical	Topical
Kills Fleas	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Kills Flea Larva	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Kills Flea Eggs	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Sterilizes Fleas	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Cats	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Dogs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Waterproof	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pregnant or Lactating	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N
Time to Max effectiveness	12h	12h	4-18 hrs	4h	4h	4h	42h	12h	4h	6h	6h	12h	24h
% killed at max effectiveness	98%	98%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	98%	98%	n/a	n/a	98%	n/a
Kills Intestinal Parasites	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Kills Ticks	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
Kills Lice	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	N
Kills Ear Mites	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Heartworm Protection	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Youngest age for use	8 weeks	8 weeks	8 weeks	4 weeks	14 weeks	8 weeks	8 weeks	7 weeks	7 weeks	8 weeks	4 weeks	8 weeks	8 weeks

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