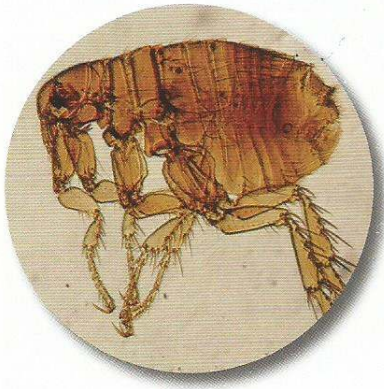


Fleas and ticks

Special care instructions for _____

Ticks are small spider-like acarids and fleas are insects, but these two tiny creatures have at least one thing in common – they are both parasites that feed on your dog's or cat's blood and can cause a lot of discomfort and more serious health problems.

Flea bites may go unnoticed on some pets, cause slight irritation in others and produce extensive itching, red lesions, hair loss and even ulcers in those animals with flea allergy dermatitis, which is the result of extreme sensitivity to flea saliva. Severe flea infestations can cause anaemia, especially in puppies and kittens. Fleas can also transmit several diseases, as well as tapeworm. The Paralysis Tick and the Brown Dog Tick are both seen in many parts of Australia, but it is the Paralysis Tick which is by far the most dangerous for dogs and cats, and can cause death in a very short time if your pet develops symptoms and is left untreated. Ticks can also be "vectors" or carriers of a number of bacterial diseases.



About fleas...

Adult fleas are wingless insects, generally smaller than a sesame seed, which feed on the blood of animals. Their proportionately enlarged back pair of legs gives them an extraordinary jumping ability. Hanging on to your pet's fur with their claws, their needle-like mouth parts bite through the skin to suck up blood – in quantities of up to 15 times their body weight daily in the case of female cat fleas.

If one flea finds your dog or cat an attractive food source, you can be sure that other fleas will too! They mate, with females laying 30–50 eggs per day. These eggs will drop to the ground within 8 hours and, as soon as 2 days later flea larvae will hatch and hide in dark places on the ground, in carpets or upholstery. After about a week of feeding on adult flea droppings, crumbs, flakes of skin, etc., the larvae spin cocoons to become pupae. The pupae can remain in this stage for very long periods of time. The cycle continues when, as soon as a week or so later, the pupae develop into adult fleas and emerge from their cocoons when they sense that a dog or cat, or other animal host, is near. The cycle – which can take as little as 12 days or as long as 180 days – can then begin again.



...And ticks

Ticks are wingless creatures that live exclusively on the blood of animals for three of the four stages of their life cycle. They are equipped with an apparatus called Haller's organ which senses heat, carbon dioxide and other stimuli to allow the ticks to locate the presence of an animal food source. Once found, they crawl on and embed their mouth parts into the animal's skin and proceed to suck up its blood.

With paralysis ticks, the most dangerous, the engorging adult female tick (pictured) injects a toxin that causes paralysis seen as a variety of presentations, but usually starts with weakness of the hindquarters that progresses to total paralysis of all four legs. Other typical early signs include an altered meow or bark and vomiting. With time, the muscles of the throat and chest become affected, causing serious problems with breathing and swallowing. Death can occur in untreated animals as little as 24 hours after symptoms commence.

The paralysis tick season varies depending on where you live, with ticks requiring humidity and mild weather to develop. In paralysis tick-infested areas, you should inspect your pet daily for ticks, especially if they have been outside in areas where there is bush or tall grass. A thorough combing within 4 to 6 hours of exposure to such environments can help prevent ticks from attaching themselves to feast on your pet. Should you find a tick, it should be removed immediately, as the longer it is attached to its host, the greater the chance for paralysis. Use finger-nails, tweezers or a tick-removing device to grasp the tick as close to the dog or cat's skin as possible and pull the tick out in one firm, steady motion. Always check if there is more than just one tick. To dispose of the tick, wrap it in several tissues and flush it down the toilet. Take your pet to the vet immediately if you are unable to remove the tick, it is inaccessible, or if your dog or cat is showing any symptoms of tick paralysis. Early treatment is vital for their best chance of survival.