



Pet Talk

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Winter Flea Treatment—Is It Necessary?

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Special points of interest:

* NEW for Fleas—Fiprovvet Spray



* Challenging some urban myths on flea treatment

Do we really need to treat our pets for fleas over the winter? Once again the marketers have been to the forefront and have been pushing winter flea treatments to “prevent the build up of fleas in the environment.” How much notice should we take of this recommendation?

The flea presents its major problem in late spring and early summer. This coincides not only with warmer weather but also increased activity is stimulated by hormonal changes in female cats and dogs as they become more sexually active in this period.

The trick is definitely to get on top of the flea population before this seasonal explosion but mid winter splashing about of insecticide with gay abandon is not necessarily the best way to do it, although it will make some drug companies happy.

The key is to keep on top of the fleas right through the spring and summer period and, if that is done,

it is quite reasonable, especially for pensioners, to economise by not treating pets in the depths of winter.

With the excellent 2-3 months coverage by fipronil a simple and effective programme can be advised to clients that gives excellent coverage without being too severe on the pocket. Using the top chemical in an efficient manner is more economical than compromising with alternatives.

Labour weekend, in late October, is an easy date to remember and that should be marked down as the start of the flea programme, falling as it does just before the late spring seasonal upsurge in activity.

Two months later it is Christmas, another easy date and also coming into the peak of the summer. A hit then is ideal and a follow up on Valentine’s Day, although really only seven weeks after Christmas, gives a good double whammy right at the peak of the season.

Easter is the other easy to remember date; although it is variable it is another ideal time to maintain flea control as it generally falls within the 2-3 month period after Valentine’s Day.

From there on it is autumn, the flea population, if there is any by this stage, is quiescent and thought can be given to skipping an application or two until the next Labour weekend, always with the proviso that flea control is rigorous from Labour weekend through to Easter and that great enemy of the flea, the vacuum cleaner, is utilised year round.

This regime is not in any textbooks and certainly is not promoted in any drug company literature, but it works very well and makes the use of the top of the line insecticide affordable for everyone.

The fact that this chemical is now available in the new Fiprovvet Spray makes it even more affordable.

Sprays V Spot-ons

At first glance it would seem to be a “no brainer” when comparing the use of spray preparations to spot-on ones in the treatment of animals with fleas; surely the latter are easier to use and far better overall? However change is the only constant in life and the pendulum is swinging back to the spray thanks to new technology keeping ahead of the field.

The common perception may be that sprays are much messier to use and also can be exhausting on the hands when applying the treatment to large dogs.

All that has now changed with the new design from R&D at Troy Laboratories. Troy has specially designed the mould to accommodate the Guala dispensing TS-2 trigger, which dispenses in upright and inverted positions. This leads to much better compliance with application in areas of limited accessibility under the animal.

In addition both the bottle and the trigger have been ergonomically designed to reduce hand fatigue, making application simple and easy. In fact the design of the grip has specifically had the female hand in

mind, to take into account that women tend to be better than men in such matters as flea control of their pets.

OK, so spot-on preparations are still very easy to apply (as long as one remembers they must be applied at skin level on a writhing animal) but the old argument that sprays take a lot of effort has gone out of the window.

As to the fact that sprays are messy to use, the wedge seal employed by the Troy Laboratories bottle means that there is a significant reduction of leakage over traditional screw threads. To add to the fact that the new bottle is so superior to what has gone before it has a drip free atomisation and an on-off safety twist nozzle.

Therefore, if one accepts that the new spray bottle used in the brand new Fiprovet Spray is not the messy, hard to pump product of yesterday, what are the comparative features of sprays and spot-on treatments?

Convenience may still be an issue to some people but the disparity is now not huge. The other major difference

“that they come in three sizes yet our pets come in a lot more sizes than that!”

is in cost of treatment and the Fiprovet Spray can supply a therapeutic dose of the gold standard insecticide in a much more economical manner.

Other important factors are irritation and toxicity. Insecticides are toxic chemicals and the concentration in the little spot-on applicators is very high to ensure enough gets dissolved in the fatty layer of the skin, i.e. 9.8% as opposed to 2.5% in the spray presentation. This is why Fiprovet Spray can be safely used in puppies and kittens from two days of age whereas the same chemical in a spot-on must not be used before the animals are eight weeks old.

Considering that the flea egg-laying pattern is adapted to be at its most prolific in late spring and early summer, to coincide with the litter season, this is a major point of difference.

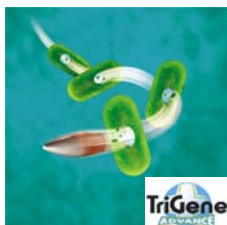
Many owners also complain of irri-
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Sprays V Spot-ons

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tation or an intense reaction by the animal when the spot-on treatments are applied. This is because of two factors, the higher concentration of the drug and also the fact that the chemical in these preparations is dissolved in cosmetic oils that many animals may be allergic to.

Even if there is no irritation there is often a greasy spot left and, thanks to the high concentration, the smell of the active ingredient itself is remarked upon by a great number of people. In effect the spot-ons do not score so well in the messy stakes and it is really, like the ease of application issue, a matter of perception rather than fact.

In short there clearly is a place in the market for both types of prod-

uct, the spot-on for those in a hurry who wish to quickly do something about flea control, (at the very least it is much better than the old permethrin collars, even if it is more expensive and actually not quite as convenient) and the spray for those on a mission against fleas.

One drawback from spot-on type applicators is that they come in three sizes yet our pets come in a lot more sizes than that! Websites abound with stories of this product or that not working as well as expected and many start to suspect resistance by the flea to the active ingredient.

The flea is a ubiquitous insect and there has been a lot of insecticide used and misused over the last decade, but it is stretching the imagination to say that widespread resis-

tance has developed so quickly. The more plausible argument is that, with the restrictions on applicator sizes, under-dosing is extremely prevalent and this leads to a perceived lack of efficacy. The all over covering of the spray would negate this.

Therefore if one is serious about fleas, the spray, thanks to the latest innovation from Troy Laboratories, is the only way to go.

Not only is it cheaper and has greater efficacy, it is now much easier to use and, as an added bonus, it can be used to spray the bedding in the nursery and other areas as well as spraying the animal. This is much safer on the young puppies and kittens than most other environmental sprays.

The Ultimate Creepy Crawly

Probably the most despised pest of all, the flea has survived virtually unchanged over thousands of years. In medieval times the flea was detested so much that it was actually tried and sentenced to death, that sentence stands today as we try to eliminate this ubiquitous pest from our lives.

It was Miriam Rothschild who discovered the mechanism whereby fleas jump using high-speed photography. She postulated that fleas evolved from winged ancestors and employed modified flight structures and made the famous comparison when she said fleas jumped as high for fleas as the Empire State Building would be for humans.

Her groundbreaking work, originally done in the rabbit flea, showing how the flea could co-ordinate

"This makes killing of fleas in the cat or dog nursery a priority"

its life cycle to that of the host by detecting hormonal changes in the host around parturition, indicated the flea greatly increased its own egg laying capacity as a result of these changes.

Thus the period of greatest flea activity, late spring and early summer, is geared to coincide with the birth of the young of the mammal, the most susceptible to infestation.

This makes killing of fleas in the cat or dog nursery a priority so an efficient chemical that is safe to use in young kittens and puppies, such as fipronil, is what is needed.

Considering that the flea lives most of its life off the animal, as eggs, larvae then pupae, environmental control is just as important as controlling animals on your pets.

The vacuum cleaner and Fipronil Spray are important tools here.



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Dead Fleas Do Not Lay Eggs

When fipronil and imidacloprid were launched on the veterinary market several years ago we were bombarded with claim and counter-claim as to their relative efficiency, each claiming to be the wonder drug that gave a rapid kill of all fleas. In those days, as the marketers would have us believe, no other drug was necessary.

Now, with the passage of time, these marvellous compounds have come off patent and we now see the change of emphasis of the marketing. Suddenly IGRs are necessary to “break the life cycle”! This is a classic case of what is known in the pharmaceutical world as evergreening, finding a way to reinvent a patent and so extend product use in the face of generics.

IGRs themselves were extremely popular before the advent of fipronil and imidacloprid but, thanks to the high efficacy of these drugs, have fallen almost into the dustbin of history until being resurrected in such a manner.

Students of marketing will look on this as a classic case but the question must be asked, are IGRs really necessary if the main active is so efficient? Many an argument can be made about gold standards in treatment and also turnover levels for the dispenser but, at the end of the day, there are a huge number of clients out there who find flea control becoming a prohibitive cost. In these uncertain economic times they will become more numerous and it will not just be pensioners and lower

socio-economic groups looking at the issue.

In short “Main Street” needs to be aware of economical efficient ways to combat one of the most despised pests of all time. Fipronil has been shown to be outstandingly successful as an insecticide and does not need an IGR added to it for increased efficacy; dead fleas do not lay eggs and, as it kills on contact, regular fipronil usage will ensure there is no build up of eggs and larvae in the environment.

Now that Fipronil, an easy to use and very economical spray preparation that kills adult fleas and larvae, is on the market “Main Street” has a product that is both affordable and highly effective.