

**Flea and Tick Control**  
by Heidi Napier, DVM  
UCCE / El Dorado County Master Gardener  
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The common flea of cats and dogs is an annoying pest and carries diseases. A cat or small dog may become anemic from fleas. Adult fleas live on the host. Flea eggs fall off the host, hatching in 1-3 days. The larvae develop into adult fleas in a few weeks or months, depending on temperature and humidity. The cocoons may be stimulated to hatch by movement (walking or vacuuming), warmth or carbon dioxide.

The best way to control fleas is to treat ALL animals in the household, even if you only see fleas on one of them. A good product such as Advantage or Frontline will kill fleas for one month and is very safe.

Many over-the-counter (OTC) products are labeled to meet federal regulations but are sometimes not safe or effective. Many OTC products are only for dogs and can kill cats. Unfortunately, one has to turn the package over and read the fine print to find out that it is unsafe for cats. Application of dog flea and tick control products is the most common poisoning in cats. Any product with permethrin or any other chemical ending with “-thrin” is not safe for cats.

Fogging or spraying the house is of little or no value, in spite of what exterminators and insecticide manufacturers tell you. The eggs and cocoons are not susceptible to insecticides. Many of the immature fleas will be under furniture, under chair cushions and in cracks and crevices where foggers will probably not reach. Several insecticides are registered for controlling fleas indoors and must be applied directly to infested areas and vacuumed regularly, but why spread harmful poisons in your house when you can safely treat your pets?

Beware of “natural” flea remedies. There is no scientific evidence that garlic works. Pennyroyal, eucalyptus, rosemary and citronella don’t work and may be toxic. Dogs have died from Pennyroyal poisoning, and d-limonene, which is extracted from citrus, is toxic to cats. Melaleuca oil is also toxic.

Many ticks carry diseases. If you find a tick on your pet, pull it off with tweezers or a “tick puller,” and protect your fingers with gloves. Mash the tick, or flush it down the toilet. You can get Lyme disease or other diseases from a tick if you mash it and have any cuts or abrasions on your hands. Just because you don’t see ticks on your pet doesn’t mean they don’t have any. The immature forms of ticks are very small and hard to see in fur.

Several types of products are available to control ticks on dogs and cats. The newer products are either applied topically to the body of the pet or provided orally. For dogs, collars containing the active ingredient amitraz (Preventic) provide good control, but

must not be used on cats. Do not use organophosphates, and if you have both a cat and a dog, do not use products containing permethrin on the dog.

For cats and dogs, topical products containing fipronil (Frontline) work well, and are the ONLY safe, effective product that kills ticks on cats. It must be used once a month, and kills fleas, too.

Other topical products include:

- Vectra 3D (dinotefuran), available in a cat and a dog product, but the dog product must not be used on cats or on a dog that lives with cats.
- Advantix, which contains the active ingredients imidacloprid and permethrin and is for DOGS only; it kills fleas and ticks. Do not confuse it with Advantage, which is safe for cats and dogs.
- Certifect, a new flea and tick product from the makers of Frontline. It contains the active ingredients fipronil, amitraz, and S-methoprene and is for DOGS only.

Systemic oral products are also available.

- Comfortis, a newer flea and tick product that contains spinosad and is for dogs only.
- Nitenpyram (Capstar) is an oral product for dogs and cats. It kills fleas very quickly but is short acting.

Remember, pesticides are poisonous. Always read and carefully follow all precautions and safety recommendations given on the label. Store all chemicals in the original labeled containers in a locked cabinet. Consult your veterinarian for the best product for your pet. No endorsement of named products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

This Saturday, February 11, class will be “Climate and Weather in the Foothills.” Learn about climatic factors affecting your garden and what influences suitability for planting in your location. This free three-hour class starts at 9 a.m. and is held in the Bethell-Delfino Agriculture Bldg., 311 Fair Lane in Placerville.

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome. The office is located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at [http://ucanr.org/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/](http://ucanr.org/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/). Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.