



Each year around this time, many pet owners have questions about fleas, ticks, and heartworms, and how to protect their furry family members from the health and disease risks posed by these parasites. If you have such questions, here are answers to some common flea, tick, and heartworm questions:

1. What kind of illnesses can fleas and/or ticks cause?

Fleas and ticks can transmit many infectious diseases when they take a blood meal from either pets or people. The most common flea of North America can transmit murine typhus, flea-borne spotted fever, cat-scratch disease (bartonellosis), and flea tapeworms. Other flea species can transmit salmonellosis, plague, rodent tapeworm, murine trypanosomiasis, and dwarf tapeworm. Fleas in general can transmit hemoplasmosis and tularemia.

Each tick species is known to transmit specific infectious diseases, including (but not limited to) Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, rickettsiosis, tularemia, cytauxzoonosis, and hepatozoonosis.

2. What is heartworm disease?

Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease caused by a blood-borne parasite transmitted by a mosquito. When a heartworm-infected mosquito bites a pet, the mosquito deposits microscopic heartworm larvae into a pet's bloodstream. The larvae mature for several months before migrating towards the heart and lungs through the bloodstream and end up on the right side of the heart and in the pulmonary artery, where they mature into adult heartworms. In some cases, heartworm disease can be fatal for pets.

3. How many different species of mosquitos can transmit heartworms?

As many as 30 different species of mosquitos can transmit heartworms.

4. Can people get heartworms?

People can get heartworms, but people are not a natural host for heartworms, and they can only get them from being bitten by the same infected mosquitos that transmit the disease to dogs or cats.

5. What are the different kinds of flea, tick and heartworm prevention?

There are many non-prescription and prescription products on the market. Some are stand-alone products, and some are in combination with other treatments/medications. Some are applied to the skin, some are worn as a collar, and some are given by mouth (orally). Some are given daily, some are given monthly, and some can last for several months.