

**DeLand Animal Hospital  
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Winter parasite control**

Just because the temperature outside has dropped, it is not a time to stop using Heartworm, flea and tick control products. While we do get some occasional freezing weather here in Florida, it is rarely enough to eliminate a large number of these pests.

Many of them will find refuge in houses or areas that are somewhat sheltered from the weather. Young mosquitoes develop in ponds, many of which do not ice over, and when the weather warms even a small amount they hatch and can then potentially spread heartworms. Fleas are notoriously hardy, especially in the cocoon stage and even a few survivors in the house can suddenly explode into a full blown infestation that can take several months to get rid of. Ticks will be active in brushy and wooded areas even in the cooler parts of the year, especially fall.

The best choice is to keep your pets on preventative every month, year round in Florida.

**Elements to a flea control program**

Key points:

- Only 5 % of fleas are adults, the other 95% are eggs, larva, and pupae.
- Flea eggs fall off into the environment constantly and can remain unhatched for several years.
- Larva seek dark places when they hatch from the eggs. They eat organic material, including flea feces, (and tapeworm egg packets). Inside, they live in pet bedding, deep in carpet fibers, under furniture and other relatively inaccessible places, outside they live in grass, sand and brushy areas. They are vulnerable to heat and desiccation.
- Pupae are relatively invulnerable to flea control measures. They can remain in the pupal (in a cocoon) for several years and then emerge as adults in the presence of heat, carbon dioxide and/or vibration.
- Adults can live for several weeks before feeding for the first time. They live their entire life on one host, unless disturbed, except in cases of an extreme infestation.

Effective flea control consists of addressing as many life stages as possible.

This includes: Insect Growth Regulators (IGR) for eggs and in some cases pupae, environmental control of larvae and young adults (typically yard and house sprays) and adulticide treatment of ALL pets in the household. Because of the life cycle of the flea, SEVERAL MONTHS may be required to get the fleas under control, and longer if any life stages are not addressed.

**The following products are NOT recommended for use on pets:**

1. Over the counter “spot on” treatments. These products are NOT the same as Frontline and Advantage. These are topical insecticides that many fleas have a

- resistance to. They can also be toxic to dogs and are very toxic to cats. Sunlight usually deactivates them and water washes them quickly away.
2. Brewer's Yeast. This has been tested and shown NOT to be an effective flea control product.
  3. Garlic. This has not been proven to be an effective flea control product.
  4. Flea collars. Contains insecticides that many fleas are resistant to. In some cases fleas have been found using the flea collar as a hiding place.
  5. Flea Powder. Is also an insecticide that fleas are resistant to and is typically of a weak formulation and can be toxic to pets anyway. It is easily washed off as well as ingested by the pets.
  6. Flea Dips. Can be very toxic to pets and anyone trying to use them. They might work for as long as a week, but they are systemic products, which are absorbed into the bloodstream and can cause liver damage.

**Products that we DO recommend to help with flea control:**

Comfortis  
Revolution (for cats)  
Frontline Plus  
Sentinel  
Flea and Tick shampoos  
Capstar  
Boric Acid  
Malathion  
Diazinon  
Sevin Dust  
Diatomaceous earth  
Ectokyl premise spray/bomb (IGR)

**Life stages and products that affect them:**

**Eggs:**

Sentinel. Has an IGR (Lufenuron) that causes eggs not to be able to hatch, that have been laid by an adult that has taken blood from a pet that is on one of these products. Works for up to 4 weeks per dose.

Frontline Plus. Has an IGR (Methoprene) that causes eggs that have come in contact with it to be unable to hatch. Works for up to 4 weeks per application.

**Larvae:**

Frontline Plus. Larvae must come into contact with the product, which may happen in bedding or with pet hair. Works for up to 4 weeks per application.

Boric Acid Powder. Used only in the environment, never on pets, may help kill larvae. It can become irritating or toxic if in contact with pets. Can easily become deactivated in the environment.

Ectokyl Premise Spray / Bomb. Contains and IGR (Nylar) that kills fleas larvae. Lasts up to 4 months per application.

Diatomaceous Earth. Should be used only in the environment. May help desiccate or kill larvae, but may be irritating to pets.

Malathion or Diazinon. An Insecticide that should be used to treat the YARD ONLY.

Pets should be kept out of the yard until it is dry.

Sevin Dust. An environment/yard product that should not be allowed to contact pets.

**Pupae (cocoon):**

Sentinel. Any larvae that have consumed feces from and adult that has consumed blood from a pet that is on these products will not be able to escape from it's pupal stage and will die. Works for up to 4 weeks per dose.

**Adults:**

Comfortis. A pill that attacks the flea's nervous system. It is only effective on fleas, and should not affect pets. This cannot be washed off with soapy shampoos. Can last for up to 4 weeks per application when given with a meal. It usually starts killing fleas within 30 minutes.

Revolution. A topical insecticide that affects most biting insects, but is not dangerous to pets. It is waterproof and will continue to work after bathing. Can last for up to 4 weeks per application.

Frontline/Frontline Plus. A topical product, that stays in the oils on a pet's skin, and attacks flea and tick nervous systems, but does not affect pets. It is waterproof and will continue to work after bathing. Lasts at least 4 weeks per application.

Flea and Tick Shampoos. Can kill adult fleas, **but only while they are on the pet, during the bath.** However, pets can be immediately reinfested after the bath.

Capstar. A tablet that works systemically to kill adult fleas when they take a blood meal. It stays in the system for about 24 hours, and starts working in as soon as 20 minutes. Though it is a systemic product it is very safe for pets.

**If any product does not seem to be working, please contact us for further information and suggestions.**