

Flea and Tick Control Products

Which Flea and Tick Control Products are Safe?

With the recent announcement from the EPA about the potential dangers of over the counter spot-on flea-control products, how can a person know which flea control products are safe and which to steer clear of?

It is currently unclear why such a large increase in adverse events has occurred, but may be due, in part, to consumer confusion as to which product they are purchasing. Other possibilities include diversion of veterinary products, black market/bootleg product and product which may vary from the original formulation.

Spot-on treatments are not monitored by the government once their registration has been approved. Unlike drugs approved by the FDA, flea and tick treatments do not currently undergo post-market surveillance.

1. Talk to your veterinarian. She will be able to help you choose and properly apply a safe, effective flea control product.
2. Know what type of preventative you are buying. I, personally, avoid permethrins as they are very toxic, particularly to cats. Permethrins have been linked to certain cancers in dogs and can cause weakness and tremoring in cats. Cats are at risk even if they are simply exposed to a dog that has been treated with permethrin. Pyrethrins are less toxic, but also less effective.

What are the differences between the products:

Frontline (fleas and ticks, no permethrin)

Advantage (fleas, no permethrin)

Advantix (fleas and ticks, permethrin)

Advantage Multi (fleas and heartworm, no permethrin)

Bio Spot, Hartz, Defend (fleas and ticks, permethrin, not water proof)

Revolution (fleas and heartworm, no permethrin)

3. Does the product kill fleas? Ticks? Heartworms? Make certain you know what the product does.
4. Certain products are only sold through veterinary offices. These products include Frontline, Revolution.
5. Make certain that you are not applying dog product to cats and that you have the correct dose for your pet's weight.
6. Is the product bath or water proof?
7. Is the product you are purchasing in the store a grey or black market product or was it intended to be sold over the counter? For example, the company that produces Frontline (Merial) only provides its product for sale through veterinary hospitals. Merial is committed to making certain consumers are being given the information to use the product correctly and being sold the proper dose of medication. If Frontline is seen on shelves at stores it is diverted product not sold directly to that store by Merial.

Other products are designed to be sold over the counter, but may not be as safe, effective, or water proof as products available through veterinarians

8. There are no “all natural” monthly preventatives for fleas and ticks that are consistently effective. Some essential oils can be toxic, particularly to cats. There is some concern about inhalation of diatomaceous earth if used topically. Continuous flea combing and borax combined with cleaning and nematodes in the yard (natural integrated parasite management) can sometimes help with infestations if you do not want to use a spot-on. Please research the mode of action of any “natural” pet products you are considering. I.e. What is the active ingredient? How does it work? Are there any potential side effects? Is this a proven therapy? Talk to your veterinarian.

9. Products such as Frontline, Advantage and Revolution, when purchased directly from your veterinarian and used as directed, are extremely safe and effective for your pet.