

Flea Control Options for Dogs

The Animal Hospital

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Flea prevention is one of the most important aspects of parasite control in dogs. Fleas are tough parasites and control is difficult even when environmental conditions are tough on fleas (dry and cold). Factor in heat and humidity (spring and summer) and eradicating a flea population in a household can be next to impossible. Most of the products and strategies we use focus on **preventing** infestation since controlling and infestation is so difficult, time consuming, and expensive.

Flea control products we have in the hospital-

-**Sentinel** (<http://www.sentinelpet.com/>) - Sentinel is a combination product that contains a heart worm preventative and an insect development inhibitor. For flea control purposes Sentinel prevents flea eggs from developing and breaks the flea life cycle. Sentinel does not kill adult fleas. Sentinel is available as a monthly flavored tablet.

-**Frontline Plus** (<http://frontline.us.merial.com>) - Frontline Plus is a combination product that contains a flea and tick preventative. For flea control purposes Frontline Plus kills adult fleas and prevents eggs and larvae from developing. Frontline Plus is available in a topical liquid application.

-**Capstar** (<http://www.capstar.novartis.us/>) - Capstar is an adult flea product that begins killing fleas in 30 minutes and will kill more than 90% of fleas on a dog within 4 hours. Capstar does not have residual activity beyond about three days and does not prevent reinfestation. Capstar is available as an oral tablet.

-**Knockout E.S. Area Treatment** (http://www.virbacvet.com/preventic/product/virbac_knockout_es_area_treatment/17/) - Knockout is a spray that treats the environment. Knockout kills adult fleas and prevents flea larvae from developing into adults for seven months.

There is no one best strategy to prevent flea infestation. Different products have varying levels of effectiveness depending on many factors. The following two strategies have worked best for us- number one is the more complete protection plan.

1- Sentinel monthly year round for life cycle control (also will prevent heartworm disease). Frontline Plus monthly during the spring and summer (this also tends to be the time we have the most trouble with ticks). Capstar given as a single dose if a flea is seen on the pet. This is the most complete flea prevention strategy since it attacks the different life stages in several ways.

2- Frontline Plus monthly year round. Capstar single dose if a flea is seen on the pet. This strategy tends to work well if the Frontline Plus is applied exactly every month. During the spring and summer months Frontline Plus may need to be applied every three weeks if it is the only routine flea control product used. We often see flea infestation of the house and pet if the Frontline Plus is not applied on time each month.

Despite our best efforts with preventatives we often still end up with a flea infestation in the house and on our pets. **We recommend the following steps if you are seeing adult fleas on your pet or on you in your house and you have been using one of the two strategies above.**

1- Make sure every pet in the house (cats and dogs) are on flea preventative. Fleas only need one pet reservoir to maintain an infestation.

2- Give a dose of Capstar to every pet. Repeat this treatment in three days.

3- Wash all pet bedding at the warmest setting allowable.

4- Vacuum the entire house, especially areas where your pets frequently spend time. Throw away the vacuum bag in the trash outside when you are finished.

5- Treat the house (especially areas frequented by pets) with Knockout E.S. Area Treatment.

6- If Frontline Plus is being used reapply at three week intervals until no fleas are seen.

7- If any pets are chewing hair out, have red or irritated skin, or have any pustules call and schedule an appointment so we can determine if a skin infection is present and discuss treatment of potential flea allergy.

If you have any questions concerning flea control please call us.