



Paw Prints

Jodi Schneider McNamee
Columnist

It's flea and tick season

It's May, and spring has finally arrived in Sisters Country. Warmer weather, longer days, flowering trees, brightly colored hanging baskets ... and fleas.

According to Debbie Putnam, DVM at Riverside Animal Hospital in Bend, the recent mild winters and warm summers in Central Oregon have resulted in an increased prevalence of these blood-sucking creatures.

This year has been especially mild, and you can expect to see more fleas and ticks than in previous years. Add a little rain and bingo, the flea population can explode.

Sisters Veterinary Clinic reports that Dr. Carl Berg has already seen a case of fleas and ticks.

Fleas are not only a nuisance but can occasionally transmit disease. In 2012, Prineville had a case of the plague which is caused by a type of bacteria called *Yersinia Pestis*. This organism is transmitted by fleas to mammals. Oregon has had five incidents of the plague since 1995.

Usually in late spring, fleas begin to emerge from their pupae as adults and migrate to the nearest dog or cat for blood meals. An adult flea mates shortly after emergence and begins laying eggs within 36 hours.

In her brief 50-day lifespan, a single flea can lay more than 2,000 eggs.

Fleas are masters of their universe. They can hide in a forest of pet hairs, especially long-coated dogs or cats and not be noticed until your pet has more than just a couple. Remember that fleas are small, and just because you don't find one on your pet, doesn't mean that they're not there.

Have you noticed Fido scratching lately? He may have been bitten by a flea, but he may also have dry skin, an

allergy, or mange bites. One way to check for fleas is to look for black specks on your furry friend or in his bed. The specks are fecal matter from adult fleas, and if you add the specks to a wet paper towel the particles will turn red.

Run a flea comb over your pet, making sure the comb reaches the skin through the coat. If black specks are on the comb when you pull it off, they might be flea feces.

Once you discover fleas on your pet, your home is probably already part of the problem. There will be eggs, larvae, and pupae wherever your dog likes to lie around or sit.

The good news is that we have dramatically more powerful and improved methods of flea and tick control available to us, so we can protect our pets. There are many new products on the market that work well to either repel or kill these critters. Check with your veterinarian as to which product is the best for your furry friend.

In addition to extreme discomfort, fleas and ticks can also cause serious health problems in pets and people. Your furry friend can become infected with tapeworms by ingesting infected fleas. Bites from

fleas can cause skin irritation and swelling, and some pets have allergic reactions to the bites that cause them to scratch, according to the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA.)

The OVMA suggests that the most effective flea control program involves treating not only Fido or Kitty, but your living environment.

Attempting to control fleas on your pets is a multi-step process. Adult fleas spend most of their time on an animal, but the flea eggs, larvae and pupae are found in abundance in the environment such as in carpeting, bedding, and grass.

One way to create a more effective guard against fleas is to treat your home environment the same day you treat Fido or Kitty.

Start by vacuuming thoroughly and frequently especially below drapes, under furniture edges, and where your pet sleeps, and clean his bedding weekly in hot water. Don't forget to clean Fido's crate, and change your vacuum bag often.

Fido loves to play outdoors in the spring, so don't forget about your outside environment. Flea control in the outdoor area involves keeping your lawn mowed,



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Mia is protected from fleas for the summer with Frontline.

and rake up any debris, such as brush or clippings. Fleas like it in moist shaded areas, so hang any non-washable items directly in the sun.

Fleas that live on your pet can also infest wildlife, so please try to prevent any wildlife from coming into your outdoor environment.

Dogs and cats are not just pets. They are members of the family, and like any member of your family, it's important to keep them healthy. So please remember to implement a flea and tick control program for Fido or Kitty so there are no surprises this summer.

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Three Peaks Builders

Shawn O'Hern established Three Peaks Builders in 2006. He's had 25 years of experience in construction, 10 of those in Sisters, where he served for three-and-a-half years as construction manager for Habitat For Humanity.

Now he's back in business for himself, providing quality new-construction and renovation work, including small additions and bathroom remodels.

Shawn takes particular pride in creating tight, energy-efficient homes, using solar energy and advanced framing techniques that allow for better insulation. That makes for a smaller impact on the environment — and cost-savings for the homeowner.

Shawn is also featured on the KZSO radio



show "In Your Home," offering all sorts of tips and insights on home improvement.

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