



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Protect your dog from fleas and ticks

You might have noticed fleas and ticks on your furry friends. That's because flea and tick season has started early in Central Oregon.

According to Sisters Veterinary Clinic, Dr. Carl Berg has been seeing ticks since winter. And they see more fleas on pets every year.

Pulling your socks over your pants while hiking can be enough to deter ticks when you're outside, but Rover probably doesn't wear clothing, so you'll need to take extra measures to protect him from these pesky pests.

Adult ticks are often visible to the naked eye, so you

may spot them on short-haired dogs. But with longer-haired dogs, it's best to do a thorough inspection with a flea comb.

Ticks are parasites that belong to the arachnid family (like spiders and mites) and live in wooded or grassy areas where they attach themselves to unsuspecting dogs walking by. If you notice that a tick has already managed to latch on to Rover you can remove the pest by using a pair of tweezers or a tick-removal tool by grabbing on to the insect and getting as close to the skin's surface as possible. Get a firm grip, but don't squeeze too tightly, and pull out slowly. Going too fast can result in part of the tick being left behind in your dog's skin. Once it's removed, don't just step on the tick. Placing it in rubbing alcohol is the most effective way to kill it, according to PetMD.

If you've noticed that Rover has been scratching lately, fleas are a likely culprit.

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

Fleas are insects that can start your dog scratching with just one bite. They have exceptional jumping skills,

leaping vertically up to seven inches to hop on a host to feed and lay their eggs!

And fleas are masters of their universe. They can hide in a forest of pet hairs until your furry friend has more than just a couple.

Remember that fleas are small, and just because you don't find one on Rover, doesn't mean that they're not there.

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.

Flea bites can cause local skin irritation and swelling that may cause your furry friend discomfort. Some dogs develop an allergic reaction to flea bites, resulting in scratching, which can lead to hair loss or a bacterial skin infection known as "hot spots." Fleas can also host tapeworms, and can transmit bacteria and viruses.

Since fleas and ticks can cause a variety of health problems for your dog, it's important to treat both your pet and his environment. The best thing you can do is to take regular preventive measures to protect your dog from these pests, and the



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Long haired dogs need a flea comb.

most effective way to do this is to treat your dog, your living areas, and your yard at the same time.

Flea control in the outdoor area involves keeping your lawn mowed. And rake up any debris, such as brush or clippings.

Regular vacuuming and steam cleaning indoors helps remove flea eggs, larvae, and pupae. Don't forget to dispose of the vacuum bag, as fleas can hatch in the bag after vacuuming.

And if you must treat your yard, a pet-friendly lawn granule application that will kill flea eggs and larvae

in addition to adult fleas is best.

The outdoors is what Central Oregon is known for and many folks enjoy taking their furry companions along. Hiking on trails usually means wooded areas along with the possibility of ticks. So remember to use flea and tick prevention this spring before stepping on that wooded path with Rover.

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.



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