

## CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

What do all dog and cat owners have in common? They must all worry about flea and tick infestations on their furry four legged friend. Fleas and ticks are a common parasite problem found wherever animals live. All parasites need a host on which to feed and reproduce, and chances are you have encountered the wide array of topical and environmental treatments available. You want to ensure you use the safest and most effective product for your companion but it can be difficult to navigate the terms used to define each product. Use this care sheet as a guide when trying to decide which type of product is best for your family pet.

**Flea and Tick Life Cycle** – In order to truly understand how certain products work you must first understand the life cycle of the enemy, fleas and ticks. Hard tick's life cycle can vary from less than a year in warm climates to up to 3 years in cooler climates. Soft ticks can take up to 3 years to mature and have several nymph stages. Adult hard ticks can survive several months without feeding.

### Fleas

**Egg-** Found in the environment which your pet rests such as dog beds, carpet or furniture.

**Larva-** 3 stages which take 1 week to several months To complete. Flea larva feed on adult flea feces, dead skin and hair.

**Pupa-** Mature in a silken cocoon over 5-14 days. A flea can survive within the cocoon anywhere from 2 months to a year without a blood meal.

**Adult-** Adult fleas found on the animals must have a blood meal to survive and reproduce. Fleas in this stage that have emerged from the cocoon must feed within one week.

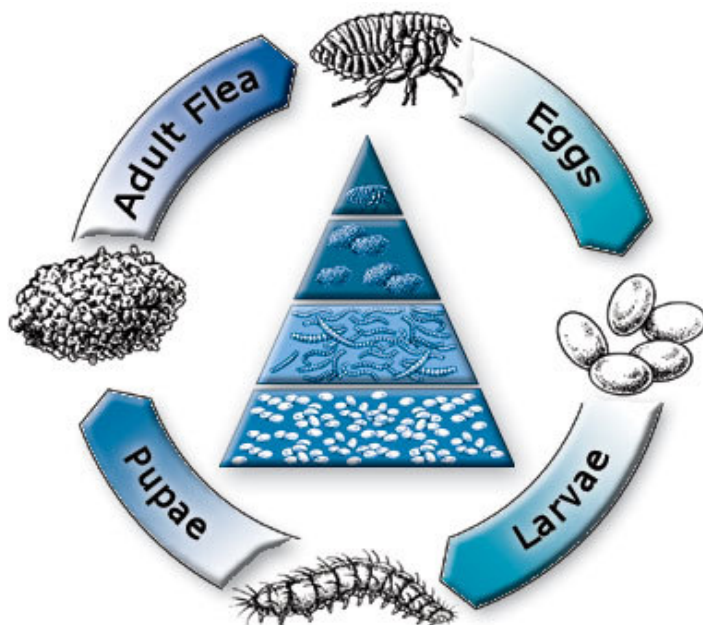
### Ticks

**Egg-** Found in the environment your pet interacts with outside such as grass.

**Larva-** Have 6 legs at this stage and do require a blood meal in order to move to the next stage.

**Nymph-** Have 8 legs at this stage. Require another blood meal to move to the next stage.

**Adult-** Once reached the female will have one last blood meal, lay approx. 1,000 eggs and then die.



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### Flea and Tick Related Concerns

Fleas and tick concerns are not just related to itchy pets. There are several serious consequences of infestation for you and your beloved pet. Your pet may ingest fleas during its routine grooming. These fleas, if carrying the larva, can lead to a tapeworm infestation within your pet's intestine. People can also become infected with tapeworms if they somehow ingest infected feces. Young pets can also suffer from Flea Bite Anemia if there is a large flea infestation. As adult biting fleas must feed on blood too many fleas on a young puppy or kitten can result in significant blood loss requiring immediate veterinary treatment. Ticks can also lead to serious medical conditions for your pet. While not all ticks carry disease, it is important to note that certain ones can transmit various diseases. The brown dog tick and the American dog tick carry the most common diseases such as Ehrlichia, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Lyme disease and tick paralysis. Seek veterinary treatment immediately if you suspect your pet has become seriously ill from a tick bite.

### Flea and Tick Control

**Immediate Relief-** While flea and tick prevention is the key to successfully controlling the health risks associated with infection you may find the need for immediate relief. A shampoo, spray, powder or topical application will help provide immediate control so that you can set up a maintenance protocol to prevent future infestations. You can also ask your veterinarian for a treatment to help with immediate flea control.

**Maintenance-** It is important to remember how the life cycle of these pests works when looking to establish a prevention program. If there are fleas or ticks on your pet, they are in your environment (home) as well. Your home and yard will need to be treated as well. Remember, fleas and ticks can survive for a long time away from their host in certain stages of the life cycle. The maintenance program you establish will be your most important step to preventing the serious consequences of infestation in your furry family member. Flea and tick products have different active ingredients however; you want to look for certain features in order to enjoy the best benefits for your friend.

- **Adulticide-** Products which contain adulticides are designed to kill only adult fleas and ticks on your pet. Many shampoos, sprays and collars feature this form of protection. They are effective for immediate results only and will not prevent fleas from coming back.
- **Insect Growth Regulators-** IGR products kill on the flea eggs, larvae and pupae stages. They are used to break the flea life cycle, but do not kill adult fleas or ticks.

The ideal product for protecting your pet against adult pests while also breaking the life cycle is one that features both an Adulticide and IGR. Most of the topical applications and household premise control products feature both types of pest relief.

#### Resource

Many PETCO stores offer grooming services with the option of adding a flea and tick treatment, please see the groomer for more information.

**Note:** The information on this care sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you need additional information, please contact your veterinarian.