

## Brunswick County - Flea Capital of the World?

Brunswick County could easily be designated the flea capital of the world. Ideal conditions for fleas are temperatures between 65 and 80 degrees and humidity levels of 75-85% - thus the reason that fleas are a year-round problem here. Many newcomers to the area have never had a flea infestation before and are often confused by the plethora of flea products on the market.

Until recently, foggers, flea collars, powders, sprays, shampoos, and dips containing toxic chemicals such as organophosphates (like malathion, diazinon), pyrethrins, synthetic pyrethroids (permethrins), and carbamates were the cutting-edge solutions to our flea problems. They are extremely effective insecticides, but unfortunately, they act as severe neurotoxins to the pet as well. It is a bit like burning down the house to get rid of termites.

Here at Zeetlegoo's Pet & People Store we get a lot of questions about what is the best and safest way to control fleas. Keep in mind that most medications for fleas and ticks do not need a prescription from your veterinarian in North Carolina. Heartworm medications, however, do require a prescription in all states. Here is a synopsis of some the over-the-counter medications that we carry at the store:

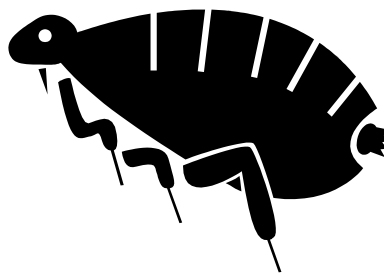
- ♦ Capstar<sup>®</sup> is a pill that is one of the least toxic of all flea products. It can be used on pets as young as 4 weeks as long as they weigh at least 2 pounds. It can be used in combination with any of the other flea remedies, and begins killing fleas within a half hour. The drawback is that Capstar<sup>®</sup> only works for 24 hours and it only kills the adults.
- ♦ Flea Shampoos – If the pet is infested with fleas it can be helpful to give them a bath both to rid them of the pests and to soothe the skin. We typically recommend giving a Capstar<sup>®</sup> pill, and then waiting 1-2 hours before the bath. As the fleas die from the Capstar<sup>®</sup> they just wash off the animal along with any eggs and flea dirt. Shampoos are available with either natural or synthetic pesticides. Neem oil is the natural extract of a tropical evergreen tree that not only acts as an insecticide; it soothes the irritated skin as well. Neem oil has the added benefit of being a fungicide and can be used for other skin conditions such as ringworm and yeast infections. Another natural extract is d-limonene which is a citrus oil based insecticide with a fresh citrus smell.
- ♦ Flea Sprays – Most flea sprays contain many of the same ingredients as the shampoos (see above.) In addition, some flea sprays contain an IGR – an insect growth regulator such as s-methoprene which interferes with the normal development of the insect. This ingredient breaks the flea's life cycle because the larvae never develop into adults.
- ♦ Topical Spot-on Products - Frontline<sup>®</sup> Plus (The “Plus” is the IGR s-methoprene), Advantage<sup>®</sup> and K-9 Advantix<sup>®</sup> are liquids that are applied directly to the pet's skin. All three of these products are designed to last a month and to kill fleas in all life-stages – eggs, larvae and adults therefore eliminating the need to treat the interior of the home. Since spot-on products spread via the oils on the skin none of these products work well if your pet has dry skin. Always wait at least two days prior or two days following a bath before applying a spot-on insecticide.

Product	Kills	Duration		Safe Age for Usage	Disadvantages
Capstar®	Adult Fleas	24 hours	Dogs or Cats	4 weeks	No adverse reactions listed
Frontline® Plus	Fleas -all life-stages, Ticks	1 month	Dogs or Cats	8 weeks	Feedback from customers is limited long-term effectiveness
<b>**Advantage®</b>	<b>Fleas -all life-stages</b>	<b>1 month</b>	<b>Dogs or Cats</b>	<b>Dogs - 7 weeks Cats - 8 weeks</b>	<b>No protection from ticks</b>
K-9 Advantix®	Fleas -all life-stages, Ticks, Mosquitoes	1 month	Dogs only! <b>(Toxic to cats)</b>	Dogs - 7 weeks	Contains permethrins which are very toxic to cats
d-Limonene Shampoos and Sprays	Fleas -all life-stages, Ticks	Up to 1 week	Dogs & Cats	12 weeks	Limited long-term effectiveness
Neem Oil Shampoos and Sprays	Fleas -all life-stages, Ticks, Ringworm, Yeast	Up to 1 week	Dogs & Cats	None found	Limited long-term effectiveness

**\*\* Advantage®** gets the best feedback from our customers for the most effective monthly flea control.

All insecticides carry a certain risk, so choose a product based on the problem you have. If your pet never gets exposed to ticks, use a product designed just to prevent fleas. Why use a product for fleas, ticks and mosquitoes on a 7 pound Chihuahua who only spends as much time outdoors as it take to do his business?

And as you enjoy the beautiful temperate climate, remember you aren't the only one who loves the weather here in Brunswick County!



- ♦ **Rae S. Keane, M.S.,** Owner, Zeetlegoo's Pet & People Store