

Ask the Vet



Dr. Angelique Fuller received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Design and Production for Theater from The North Carolina School of the Arts in 1997, a Master of Science in Animal Health Science from The North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University in 2003 and a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine from North Carolina State University in 2007. She is a member of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Dr. Fuller has had a wide variety of life experience and finds that her art and medicine backgrounds blend together seamlessly. Growing up, she always had a love for animals and realized early that a pet's health and well-being played an important role in the human-animal bond. Dr. Fuller's professional interests include all aspects of family pet practice with a focus on internal medicine, preventative health care and chronic pain management.

Dr. Fuller, husband Brian and their son enjoy sharing their home with two cats (Zappa & Burman), two dogs (Duncan and Goosie) and one beta fish named Fishie the Grouch. They also have six beautiful chickens that they adore!

Attack of the FLEAS!!!

We treat our dog with flea control meds during the warm months, but what about winter? Are fleas dangerous?

As a veterinarian in North Carolina, I see my share of fleas in practice. Some dogs and cats can have a "flea circus" living on them and appear perfectly unshaken, while others suffer incredible allergic reactions and severe illness, even death in some cases. If you want to beat fleas, then you have to understand the flea and their life cycle. Next, you have to treat your animal with a safe and effective product that fits your pet's lifestyle.

Fleas are responsible for several diseases that make our animals sick and can also make us sick.

Pet allergic reactions and skin infections from flea bites are very common and often require multiple medications to treat and relieve the inflammation and infection. Another disease is flea bite anemia. This happens when a pet has so many bites from these blood suckers that it causes their red blood cell count to be low, requiring supportive care and a possible blood transfusion. Feline Infectious Anemia is caused by a life threatening blood parasite carried by fleas. Tapeworm infections are most commonly caused by fleas and although they typically cause little or no harm to your pets, they are considered a possible threat to humans. Another human disease linked to fleas is Cat Scratch Fever (Bartonellosis), where the cat does not become ill, but people can become very sick. The take home message is simple, fleas can cause serious disease and death, and this can be avoided by prevention.

Fleas are very adaptive, their life cycle is active throughout the year.

A common misconception I hear from people is that fleas "die off" in the winter. Not true, especially in North Carolina! While

the temperature outside does determine how fast the fleas go through their life cycle, it does not stop the life cycle. So what does that mean for pet owners? Simple, attack fleas when they are at their lowest numbers in the cooler months and not have nearly the struggle in the warmer months. This is why flea prevention should be given year round, even if your pet is an indoor only pet.

Prevention is important.

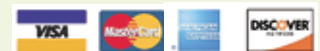
The market is flooded with topical flea products, some are good and others not. When you are trying to decide what to put on your pet, listen to your veterinarian and decide together what will be the safest product for your pet. And while not all over the counter products are bad, I've seen some awful reactions, some because the wrong product was applied and others because the animal was sensitive to one or more of the ingredients. When choosing a flea product, remember, you do often get what you pay for and if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is not true. Don't be afraid to ask your veterinarian what they use on their own pets. I use Parastar™ Plus and Sentinel® for my dogs and Revolution® and Program® injectable for my cats. These products work great for my household, but I sometimes recommend different products for my patients based on the pet's lifestyle and situation. Frontline® was the mainstay number one prevention for a long time, then came Frontline® Plus and now everyone, it seems, claims to have a comparable product. Well, the truth is that there are products available that seem to work faster and more effective than Frontline, but there are many that don't seem to be able to live up to their claims.

Hang in there, flea control is possible, but it will take persistence and patience.

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