



Lorrie Boldrick, D.V.M.
email: lb@barefootvet.com

Flea Resistance - True or Not True?

This year it seems that more and more people are finding fleas on their dogs even though they are using their Frontline or Advantage faithfully. Are the fleas becoming resistant to these new drugs? I've always thought that fleas had a far better "R&D" department than most drug companies. But the experts say it is not true. Resistance is not happening yet.

The cat flea (*Ctenocephalides felis*) is the flea that infests most of our dogs and cats. At least one strain of this flea shows more natural vigor and some reduced susceptibility to flea products, but it does not have an acquired resistance. But there is no product that will kill 100% of the fleas. Nothing is perfect.

These newer topical flea products have worked so well that we have all, owners and veterinarians alike, become complacent. Treating animals with these topicals is all that is necessary in 99 percent of the cases. These products must be applied properly and according to their recommended schedule.

In addition, we must also remember to treat the environment that our pets live in.

Opossums and rats and stray cats go through most of our yards at night - and they happily leave some of their fleas behind. When your dog goes out, these new fleas jump on him hoping for a meal. Your dog's flea control product will kill these new fleas, but it will take up to 24 hours to do so. If there are too many fleas in your yard, the Frontline or Advantage just can't keep up.

Helpful hints and some Flea Facts:

- Use a calendar to record when you apply your topical flea product. Don't trust yourself to remember the 30 day cycle.
- Do NOT bathe your pet within 48 hours before or after application.
 - These products "translocate" and spread over the pet's body in the "greasy" coating of the skin. If you wash off this layer, the product stays where you put it and cannot perform properly.
- Topical flea products do not kill fleas instantly. But if you keep your pet in a flea free area for 24 hours, all the fleas will be dead.
- Be sure to apply the product to the skin and not the haircoat.
- Treat all pets in your household with flea prevention.

- If your pets' environment is shared with wildlife, there will be more fleas in it.
- If the temperatures have been around 80 degrees with 80% humidity, this is the very best environment for happy fleas.
- If you see fleas on your pet, then it has come in contact with flea infestation.
- The *C. felis* flea life cycle (eggs, larvae, pupae, adult), possible hosts for cat fleas (dog, cat, raccoon, opossum), sites of infestation (in home, in garage, in yard, under house, in dog park, in apartment common area, etc.) can make it tough to find the source of the flea problem.
- Spray your yard for fleas.

For now, remember what the experts are saying: "It is not beyond reason to expect eventual flea resistance to these products, but this could take many, many more years to begin happening."