

PET QUESTIONS

11/13/2011

Store bought flea and tick topical medications:

If you are going to use these, please follow the directions and make sure you follow age directions (make sure your puppy or kitten is not too young for the product). Definitely make sure that you never, ever use a dog product on a cat. Cats are very sensitive to certain flea medications. The dog products could kill a cat and we have seen many times where a “cat product” was applied and still the cat had a severe reaction, including muscle tremors and seizures. There is the possibility that fleas have developed a tolerance or resistance to certain products that have been on the market for many years. Also, when you buy a product over the counter, you do not have the benefit of being educated by veterinary staff on the product. If a pet has a problem with a product that is sold at a veterinary hospital, the veterinarian can easily contact the company for reporting, refunding, etc.

Home remedies for irritated skin:

Simply bathing your pet can help remove allergens and soothe the skin. An oatmeal shampoo is a good option. Do not use fragrant, scented human shampoos. Some over the counter antihistamines are safe and sometimes effective for itching in dogs and cats but you would need to contact your vet for the proper frequency and dosing. Many pets are itchy from fleas and from allergies to a wide variety of things. These can include all types of pollens, plants, grasses, trees, molds, other insects, and even ingredients in the pet’s food. It can be beneficial to wipe down your pet’s coat (including belly, chest, and paws) with a damp cloth or unscented baby wipe after bringing the pet in from outdoors. This can remove some of the allergens that were in the air outside or on the ground. Many pets can have skin infections secondary to allergies and itching so they definitely need to be examined and treated by their veterinarian. Do not apply topical flea medications to red or irritated skin.

New diseases that owners should know about:

Leptospirosis is not a new disease but is one that we have seen an increased incidence of in the past few years. It can be a deadly disease that is carried by wildlife including raccoons, skunks, opossums, squirrels, and rats. Livestock and other dogs can also carry it. It can survive for long periods in water and can cause acute kidney and liver failure in dogs. This disease can be passed from animals to people. Prevention is by vaccination.

Canine influenza is caused by the flu virus H3N8. It only affects dogs. It is highly contagious. About 80% of dogs that are infected will show signs. Dogs that don't show signs can still spread the virus to other dogs. Canine flu has been reported in at least 35 states now, including N.C. Dogs exhibit a persistent cough- sometimes moist, sometimes dry. Other signs include nasal discharge, lack of energy, loss of appetite, and fever. In about 20% of cases, more severe signs such as high fever and pneumonia develop. A small number of deaths have occurred from canine flu. There is a vaccine to provide protection and is especially recommended in dogs that board or travel.

Many people do not realize how prevalent heartworm disease is. Mosquitoes carry and transmit heartworms and even inside pets can get heartworms (mosquitoes can get in our houses). Dogs and cats can get heartworms.

Despite the popular belief of many people, vaccines are still beneficial and needed for our dogs and cats. Rabies vaccination is state law and is as much for our protection as our pets. We still see many dogs get parvovirus and cats get feline panleukopenia and feline leukemia that could have been prevented by proper vaccination. Especially when our pets are puppies and kittens, they need boosters on their vaccinations to develop proper immunity. Just receiving one vaccination is not enough. Your veterinarian will recommend the appropriate vaccine schedule for your pet.

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