



Merck Animal Health Global Survey Reveals Gaps in Flea and Tick Prevention, Highlights Need for Year-Round Care

Pet owners share challenges in maintaining flea and tick care

Fleas and ticks pose a year-round threat to both pet and human health, potentially transmitting serious infections and diseases like tapeworms and Lyme disease.

The recent Pet Owner & Vet Perspectives on Parasite Treatment and Prevention: A Global Survey, conducted by Merck Animal Health, reveals critical gaps in pet owner adherence, knowledge of flea and tick threats, as well as preferences for treatment options. The survey underscores the need for consistent, year-round flea and tick prevention – particularly as recent data links warmer temperatures to the expanding geographic spread of fleas and ticks.

Flea and Tick Risks Rise with Warmer Temperatures Year-Round, Yet Most Pets Aren't Fully Protected

Changes in the climate contributed to the expansion of fleas and ticks in more geographic regions than ever before.

Ticks have been expanding their geographic ranges in recent decades largely due to warming temperatures.ⁱ Furthermore, tick populations in many areas of the past and even newly established localities have increased in abundance.ⁱ

Flea and tick season lasts longer as the climate is warming.

Recent data illustrates that the world has experienced the hottest decade in history.ⁱⁱ

Data shows that warmer average temperatures can mean longer warm seasons, earlier spring seasons, shorter and milder winters, and hotter summers, meaning conditions might become more hospitable for many carriers of vector-borne diseases.ⁱ

Therefore, one way warmer temperatures might affect pet and human health is by increasing the risk of vector-borne diseases.

A vector is any organism – such as fleas, ticks.

Fleas and Ticks Pose Serious Health Risks to Both Pets and Humans, Yet Many Pet Owners Underestimate the Need for Consistent, Year-Round Protection

The majority of pet owners (82%) see fleas/ticks as a threat to their pet's health and 75% see them as a threat to their personal and family's health.

Half of pet owners (51%) of dog owners and 62% of indoor/outdoor cat owners have had a flea/tick problem.

While most pet owners are aware of skin irritation (88%), tapeworms (85%), Lyme disease (84%), and consider flea/tick-borne illnesses as harmful to pets (59%), themselves and their family (53%), 55% of veterinarians report that more than 50% of pet owners aren't administering year-round flea/tick prevention.

Despite the possible threat of fleas and ticks, the vast majority of pet owners allow pets on furniture and beds.

The vast majority of indoor/outdoor cat owners and dog owners allow their pets on the bed (89% and 79% respectively).

Flea/tick borne illnesses are seen as slightly less of a serious threat in APAC compared to AMERS and EU.

48% in APAC view it as a moderate/severe harm to pets vs. 59% globally.

Routine Check-Ups Are the Ideal Time to Address Flea and Tick Care

Veterinarians are four times more likely than pet owners to define flea and tick season as year-round.

Parasite prevention is a common topic during routine check-ups, usually initiated by the veterinarian.

According to about half of pet owners, veterinarians initiate the discussion around treatment (57% dog owners; 56% of indoor/outdoor cat owners).

EU veterinarians are more likely to offer flea/tick treatments as part of routine care (93% dog appointments, 91% cats).

This is significantly less common than in AMERS (84% dog appointments, 80% cats).

Veterinarians estimate 24% of clients on average don't bring their pets in annually, often due to financial constraints.

Veterinarians Express Doubt Over Pet Owner Compliance Despite Pet Owner-Reported Confidence in Administering Treatment

While most pet owners feel confident administering treatments, veterinarians doubt their compliance.

80% of pet owners feel confident, but 74% of veterinarians worry about consistency of administration.

46% of dog owners and 51% of cat owners reported they have forgotten to administer treatment to their pets in the past year.

Many veterinarians (55%) feel a majority of their clients do not administer treatment year-round, administer treatment late (43%), and miss doses (41%).

Veterinarians and Owners Are Open to Less Frequent Parasite Treatment, Pending Safety Data

Most veterinarians are on board to recommend annual injections. For those not likely to recommend, the most common reason was potential of side-effects (47%).

A majority of veterinarians (65%) are likely to recommend a once-yearly medication.

And just over half (55%) agree they would prefer to treat less frequently and even more (76%) are open to less frequent administration.

Trust in Prescription (Rx) Treatments Remains Strong Globally, but Regional Preferences Vary

Rx treatments are generally trusted more and are viewed as more effective than over-the-counter options.

71% of veterinarians view Rx options as more effective.

79% of pet owners trust Rx options “fully/a lot.”

Oral medications and collars are the most popular solutions among owners, and most recommended by veterinarians.

42% of dog owners use oral medications, 36% use collars.

34% of indoor/outdoor cat owners use oral medications, 35% use sprays, and 33% use collars.

Most veterinarians (65%) are likely to recommend once-yearly medications; however, veterinarians in EU are least likely (54%), mainly due to fear of potential side effects.

Safety & Length of Effect of Treatment are Pet Owner's Top Priorities

Safety is the most important consideration overall for pet owners (37%). Duration of effect (31%) and minimal side effects (30%) are top considerations when picking a treatment.

Three out of four (75%) of pet owners are likely to try a once-yearly flea/tick medication.

Veterinarians play a big role in making treatment recommendations for pet owners and prioritize ease of use and duration of effect.

The vast majority of veterinarians (90%) agree that cat/dog owners rely on them to provide recommendations about flea/tick prevention.

The most important criteria for vets when recommending flea/tick treatment are ease of administration (65%), minimal side effects (65%), and broad-spectrum efficacy (64%).

Stay Educated on Flea/Tick Diseases & Discuss Prevention with Your Veterinarian

Flea and tick risks can vary widely across regions. Stay informed by speaking with your veterinarian about local flea and tick-borne diseases, key symptoms to watch for and treatment options that support year-round prevention.

For more information, visit <https://www.merck-animal-health.com/media/fleaandtick-global-survey>

Survey Methodology:

The Pet Owner & Vet Perspectives on Parasite Treatment and Prevention: A Global Survey was conducted by Savanta on behalf of Merck Animal Health among n=4,072 pet owners and n=582 veterinarians in 15 countries. Pet owners were adults 18+ who own a dog and/or cat. Pet owner sample size by country: Australia & New Zealand n=268, Brazil n=318, Canada n=277, China n=256, France n=257, Germany n=259, Italy n=283, Japan n=289, Mexico n=286, Peru n=286, Poland n=296, Spain n=294, United Kingdom (UK) n=276, United States (U.S.) n=427.

Veterinarians worked at least 10 hours a week in practice and treat both dogs and cats. Veterinarian sample size by country: Australia & New Zealand n=40, Brazil n=43, Canada n=43, China n=52, France n=41, Germany n=41, Italy n=42, Japan n=24, Mexico n=52, Peru n=40, Poland n=38, Spain n=42, United Kingdom (UK) n=42, United States (U.S.) n=42. The research was conducted online between December 23, 2024, and January 28, 2025.

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