

10 TOP EXTERNAL PET PARASITES

FLEAS

WHAT IS IT?

Fleas progress through several distinct life stages in which the pests transform from eggs into larvae, then into pupae, and then finally into reproducing, blood-sucking adults.



SYMPTOMS:

Excessive scratching, reddened skin, and hair loss are all possible indicators of a flea infestation.



HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Female fleas lay up to 500 eggs in their lifetime both directly on their hosts and on their surrounding environment. Your pet can catch fleas from other pets that are infested or from the environment while out for a walk.

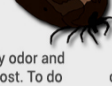
TREATMENTS:

A wide variety of flea preventives and treatments are available to remove infestations from both your pet and your home. Flea collars, topical treatments, sprays, and other solutions offer varying levels of protection.

TICKS

WHAT IS IT?

These parasites also suck the blood of pets but bring the added risk of spreading disease. Ticks progress through three life stages: larval, nymphal, and adult.



SYMPTOMS:

Itching and scratching are often caused by ticks- but instead of identifying symptoms of a tick infestation, it's wiser to simply check your cat or pet for ticks during seasons with warm weather. Any ticks on your pet should be easily viewable during a simple inspection of your pet's skin and coat.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Ticks find their prey by detecting body odor and heat and directly grabbing hold of a host. To do this, the tick assumes a specific position that increases its chances of coming into contact with a host, likely atop tall blades of grass or bushes.

TREATMENTS:

Topical preventives work to repel ticks, while other treatments kill ticks on contact. It is also possible to remove ticks with the proper tool and no additional treatment. It is, however, important to remove the tick carefully and to consult with a veterinarian.

EAR MITES

WHAT IS IT?

One of several types of mites, these incessant parasites make their home in the ear canal of your cat or dog. These mites have a three-week life cycle and are too small to be easily spotted by the naked eye. They can cause ear infections and irritations in the ear.



SYMPTOMS:

Intense itching in the infested area, excessive scratching, shaking of the head, small bumps in their outer ear and ear canal, abrasions and inflammation on the backs of their ears, and scaly, crusty skin on the neck, rear and tail are all symptoms caused by ear mites.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Ear mites pass from pet to pet and are most commonly found in cats. Ear mites can spread from cats to dogs and vice versa during casual contact between pets. These mites are highly contagious and have a life cycle that lasts between 3 and 4 weeks.

TREATMENTS:

Most ear mite treatments are pesticides that eliminate both adults and eggs over a two week period of administration. It can also be useful to use an otic cleanser to relieve symptoms of infection. It's recommended to follow up with your veterinarian to ensure that the problem is solved.

DEMODEX MITES (MANGE MITES)

WHAT IS IT?

This genus of mite is one of the most common. Fortunately, these mites are known for their lack of symptoms- meaning that they aren't particularly imposing. These mites burrow deep into the dermis of pets.



SYMPTOMS:

Infected pets may suffer from Demodicosis, or red mange, which causes the inflammation of hair follicles, small pustules, and plaque-like crust around the edges of their eyes.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Demodex mites that infect cats are rare; however, Demodex canis is common in dogs. Each species infests the hair follicles and sebaceous glands before proceeding to internal systems. This means that transmission is generally limited to cats or dogs that enter prolonged contact with an infected pet.

TREATMENTS:

There are no treatments made specifically for cats- but insecticides with ivermectin or amitraz are recommended. Cats and dogs with non-localized infestations must receive treatment for 1-2 months to eliminate the infestation.

CHEYLETIELLA MITES

WHAT IS IT?

Another genus of mites, Cheyletiella, live on the skin and is found on both cats and dogs. Unlike other types of mites, Cheyletiella species are not specialized to a specific type of host. These mites are small and can be easily confused for dandruff.



SYMPTOMS:

Cheyletiella infestations, which are known as Cheyletiellosis, are characterized by flaky skin, redness, small bumps, scabs, and hair loss. In some instances, sneezing can be symptomatic of mites in the nose.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Cheyletiella mites can spread between animals of any species, so they are particularly contagious. Fortunately for pet owners, the mites can only spread when direct contact is made between the potential host and an infested pet or infested habitat.

TREATMENTS:

Like other mites, Cheyletiella can be treated by most general insecticides. This means that flea preventives should, for the most part, work to kill these mites as well. In particular, treatments with milbemycin, selamectin, or ivermectin are effective when it comes to eliminating mites.

SARCOPTES SCABIEI (ITCH MITES)

WHAT IS IT?

Sarcoptic mites are a genus of mites with several species that affect pets. Different species of sarcoptic mites are better adapted for different hosts. Species of itch mites are known to infest cats, dogs, humans, cows, and horses.



SYMPTOMS:

Sarcoptic mites burrow beneath your pet's skin in a way that produces dry, crusty lesions. This might also result in the development of scabies or mange. These conditions are characterized, respectively, by rashes with small blisters and hair loss.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Sarcoptic mites will only spread from dog to dog or from cat to cat; however, mites can travel fairly easily, making them highly contagious. Dogs can also catch sarcoptic scabiei, a species of sarcoptic mite, from wild coyotes or foxes.



TREATMENTS:

Treatments that include imidacloprid or moxidectin are appropriate for treating dogs, whereas fipronil-based treatments are recommended for cats. Ivermectin is another alternative available to both types of pets.

LICE

WHAT IS IT?

Chewing lice have large mandibles and are less-adapted for blood-sucking. One species of chewing lice affects cats while another infests dogs. Another type of lice, which is more suited to blood-sucking also infests dogs.



SYMPTOMS:

Lice infestations can be identified by the irritation and damage it causes to infested pets. Itching will elicit intense scratching from pets and can also cause restlessness and matted coats. Lice can also be viewed when pets are examined up close to confirm a diagnosis.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Lice generally only spread from cat to cat or from dog to dog. Lice spread from one animal to another when they come into direct contact with a contaminated object or an infested pet.



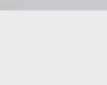
TREATMENTS:

Most flea preventives and treatments are sufficient to kill or prevent lice infestations. Because lice can survive away from their hosts, it may also be necessary to treat your pet's habitat. Accessories and pet bedding can be treated by being put through the dryer.

MOSQUITOES

WHAT IS IT?

These insects technically circumvent the label of parasite because they do not live on a host. These blood suckers leech off of other animals and can spread dangerous diseases when feeding.



SYMPTOMS:

If your pet is scratching excessively, it could be due to a mosquito bite. If a mosquito infects your pet with heartworm, you can expect persistent cough, lethargy, fatigue, reduced appetite, and weight loss in your pet. It can also cause respiratory distress and vomiting in cats.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Because mosquitoes do not infest pets, their spread is inconsequential; however, they are capable of spreading diseases and parasites. Mosquitoes are known carriers of heartworm and are actually a necessary part of its life cycle.

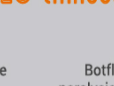
TREATMENTS:

It can be difficult to prevent mosquitoes from biting your pets due to their high mobility. Certain flea and tick preventives that contain the ingredient imidacloprid are capable of repelling mosquitoes and preventing the spread of disease for up to 4 weeks.

CUTEREBRA BOTFLIES (MAGGOTS)

WHAT IS IT?

Maggots are common in the Americas and are particularly prevalent in rodents. These parasites live in internal tissues, skin, and throughout their host's body. This versatility allows them to cause serious damage to their hosts, making them fairly dangerous to pets.



SYMPTOMS:

Botflies can cause coughing, vertigo, fever, paralysis, lesions, and lumps in your pet's skin. These lumps generally feature small pores to provide a route for fresh air to reach the maggots. Botfly infestation can also cause your pet to walk in circles or lie down for extended periods.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

The spread of botflies in cats and dogs occurs when pets pass through grass or bushes in which botflies have laid their eggs. When the eggs have hatched, the botflies remain on the grass, awaiting a host to brush against them. Once on their host, they travel along their exterior until they find an orifice to enter. Kittens and puppies can also catch them at birth if their mother is infected.

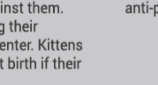
TREATMENTS:

In the early stages of a botfly infestation, your veterinarian should be able to easily remove the maggots from your pet safely. More severe infestations can be treated with general anti-parasite medications. preventives work to fight off botflies, as well.

DIPTERAN (SAND FLIES)

WHAT IS IT?

Sand flies are flying blood-suckers that inhabit sandy terrain, particularly in tropical regions. These parasites can pose a serious threat of transmission of potentially dangerous pathogens in both cats and dogs.



SYMPTOMS:

Bites from sand flies can cause small bumps and mild itching and irritation. Bitten dogs are at risk for Deadly leishmaniasis and cats for deadly feline leukemia. The former is characterized by anemia, liver or kidney failure, weight loss, and skin alterations. Feline leukemia causes weight loss and apathy.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Sand flies are not technically parasites, since they do not live on a host. Like mosquitoes, these winged insects can land on and bite your pet, so it's important to be aware of their possible presence.

TREATMENTS:

Treating sand fly bites can come down to using a colloidal shampoo or lotion to relieve irritation caused by bites. It's best to prevent bites completely with flea and tick preventives to inhibit the spread of disease.