

Natural Pet Remedies for Flea and Tick Control

Written by PETA

While we may not be able to roll back the global warming trend, there are easier, softer ways to treat parasites, and ways in which we can avoid some of the pests.

A lot of people are reluctant to use chemical flea treatments because of the possibility of a toxic reaction with the skin. "If it isn't safe for my children, how can it be safe for my pet," they ask. Unless it is a full blown flea infestation, you may have good results by using gentler and safer methods for flea eradication and control.

For dogs, a daily dose of brewer's yeast mixed with a small amount of garlic in their kibble will help to repel fleas. You can also add brewer's yeast to your cat's food, but omit the garlic (onions and garlic are toxic for cats).

Fleas are also known to be repelled by citrus. A freshly squeezed orange or lemon can be rubbed onto your pet's fur, with no harm to your pet if it is licked off, and fresh smelling fur to boot.

Remember the old cartoons where dogs would jump into water to relieve themselves of fleas? Water really does work. Since fleas do not grasp onto the hair shafts, they fall off in the water and drown. A good dip in a tub of water will wash away most, if not all of the fleas on your pet.

Using a gentle shampoo, or a little bit of dish liquid, perhaps one with a citrus base (fleas are repelled by lemon and orange), along with thorough and regular brushing, will go a long way toward ridding your pet's body of fleas. Around the house, vacuuming, laundering, and disinfecting the floors and your pet's living spaces will help to control the population of fleas (just make sure you do not use products with volatile organic compounds).

In the yard, you might consider adding a natural predator of fleas. Nematodes are small worms that feed off of flea larva, and are easy to find at garden stores or pet shops. Keep in mind that the type of nematode that is being recommended here is termed a "beneficial" nematode. It is not the type that is known for infecting animals as heartworm.

Ticks hang out in tall grass and use the opportunity to grab on to passersby when they feel body warmth. If you are going to be spending time in wooded or grassy areas with your dog, you might want to fashion some cover-up clothing for your dog to avoid ticks. An old t-shirt can be altered to fit your dog's body, and old socks can be cut to make "leg warmers." This may not entirely prevent ticks from making their way onto your dog, but it keep most of them off since they have nothing to latch onto, and will slow the rest down so they do not spend as much time on your dog's skin. Because ticks carry dangerous bacteria, repelling them is a priority.

One of the natural repellents that a lot of people have success with is rose geranium oil, which can be applied to your dog's collar. Don't use this on your cat, though, they are notorious for bad reactions with essential oils. With ticks, the best thing you might do is to check your pet a few times a day when you are in an area that has ticks, and remove them promptly.

Proper technique is important for removing ticks and fleas, so make sure that you are acquainted before you do it yourself. Now that you have a few alternate means of combating fleas and ticks, you can feel confident that your pets will remain bug-free throughout the year.