

# Wilmette Pet Center

*"the place for people who love pets"*

## The problem with pests:

This topic is enough to cause a lot of people to start itching, but, with the warmer weather coming, it's something we all have to deal with. As we come out of winter, eggs of all sorts of insects are also beginning to come out of their winter wait. The big culprits:

### **Mosquitoes**

Female mosquitoes looking for a meal is such a common occurrence during the summer. They breed in standing pools of water; eliminating them from around your house, including buckets, puddles, and bird baths, will reduce the population and reduce the risk of being bitten.

### **Mites**

There are a wide variety of mites that affect your pet; from the fur mite that likes rabbits and hedgehogs to mange to ear mites, these tiny pests can cause a lot of irritation for your pet. You may notice your pet scratching more, or rubbing up against things in their cage. When you look closer at their skin, on the thinner scales on reptiles or under a small animal's fur, you may notice small dots moving around. They can be light in color, brown, or dark red. They can come from anywhere: bedding and hay are natural sources of infestation, or they can even hitch a ride when coming in from outside.



### **Ticks:**

Ticks are more commonly found when you and your pet have spent any time outdoors, especially in high grass or shrubs. These parasites attach to you or your pet, looking for a meal. Ticks are often first felt while petting your dog or cat.

The best thing to do is prevent any association with a tick in the first place. When walking in wooded or grassy areas, wear long pants tucked into shoes and long sleeves; light colored ones make it easier to see ticks. Always carefully check both yourself and your dog after activity where ticks are common.

### **Fleas:**

Did you know the Chicago has the distinction of being in a high flea problem area? To fight this enemy, it helps to know them and their life cycle:

In the summer time, fleas live outside in the grass and bushes, looking for their next meal. Fleas have four distinct stages of life: egg, larvae, pupae, and adult. Adult fleas will jump on a host animal as it passes, and eat blood meals in order to reproduce. The female flea lays her eggs - up to 50 eggs per day (that's 1,500-1,600 eggs over several months!), which are not sticky and fall off the pet, usually onto the floor, carpeting, upholstery, or their bedding. The eggs can hatch into larva anywhere from two days to a few weeks - and these infant forms stay in fibrous or porous areas, eating organic materials and growing. Anywhere from 5 to 18 days later, the larvae pupate, and then will emerge as adults to again feed and start the process all over again, easily overwhelming households with infestations.



This is the hidden enemy – the next generation of fleas.

## The problem:

Besides being creepy and gross, these parasites pose some danger to use and our pets, as they are vectors for disease. Ticks are the source of Lyme disease and a whole host of bacterial infections. Fleas can also carry bacterial infections, be a source of intestinal tape worms, and can cause an allergic dermatitis. This causes the skin to become red, inflamed, itchy, and can cause hair loss. This can be a constant source of irritation to your pet, as well as open them up to other skin infections. Besides a wide range of infection agents, mosquitoes are carriers of heartworm, a parasite that infects cardiac tissue and can eventually be fatal to dogs and cats. To avoid heartworm, see your vet for heartworm preventative, and for more information check out the [American Heartworm Society](#). Even if they do not transmit any pathogen, the bites themselves are irritating and potential sources of infection from scratching.

## Treatment:

Using proper flea, tick, mite, and mosquito preventatives and treatments are the *only* effective way to prevent and eliminate these pests. Wilmette Pet Center has the best products with the best staff to save you and your pet aggravation. We have entire lines of vet recommended products, along with more natural, wholistic, and gentler methods to help you and your pet.

### **In addition to your chosen treatment, there are some practical things you can do to help rid yourself of these pesky pests:**

**Mites:** Treating mites is easy, but requires several steps. Since mites can hide out in porous surfaces, remove all soft materials from the cage, such as wood and paper bedding, wooden huts, houses, and toys. Use newspaper as a substrate while treating mites. Plastic and ceramic decorations and dishes are fine to leave in the cage. Use a mite spray every second or third day, on your pet and their cage.



Physically removing an attached tick needs to be done carefully. If you leave the head behind, the tick will live and continue to feed. Contrary to old wife's tales, do not use any chemicals, such as lighter fluid, petroleum jelly, or nail polish remover, nor should you try to burn them off. None of these methods are totally effective in removing these parasites, and could cause infection. Use a pair of tweezers, grab the tick as close to the skin as possible. Draw the tick out, using steady and direct pressure. Do not twist when doing this, as it can damage the tick and leave parts behind. For best results, use one hand to hold the tweezers and pull, and use the

other hand to hold the skin firmly in place. Clean the skin and treat with topical antibiotics. Keep an eye out for any infection, fever, headache, or rash afterwards; if you suspect any problems or infections, contact your doctor or your vet.

Fleas: Treating fleas requires a multi-prong approach. First, begin by thoroughly vacuuming all carpet and upholstery. Vacuum heavily trafficked areas daily and other areas weekly. Although it is believed that the force of vacuuming kills the fleas and larvae, ensure that they don't emerge from the bag or canister by sealing it in a plastic bag and disposing of it. Placing a paper towel sprayed with your choice of flea killer in the bag or canister can kill off ones that are still alive. If you do any travelling with your pet (such as visits to the vet for flea treatments), be sure to vacuum your car; all the treatments and work in the home will not work if the fleas are still infesting your car. Then, wash all pet bedding frequently in very hot water to kill eggs and larvae. Bathe your pet in a quality flea and tick shampoo for 15 minutes to drown fleas.

**There are a wide variety of products that will help you in your battle against these pests; so many, in fact, that to do them justice we've covered them in [this care sheet](#), or check our website.**

*The important thing is that prevention is much easier and cheaper than treatment.*

*Stop by and talk with our trained staff about the options for treating your pet; we have options just as effective as the solutions from your vet, at a much more economical price.*