

## Understanding pest insects:

This topic is enough to cause a lot of people to start itching, but 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. Surprisingly, the fall is another big time for infestations, especially of fleas, as they begin seeking a warmer place to survive the winter. The 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!),



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

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.

## The problem:

Besides being creepy and gross, these parasites pose some danger to us and our pets, as they can be vectors for disease. Ticks are the source of Lyme disease and a whole host of bacterial infections. Fleas can also carry bacterial infections and can be a source of intestinal tape worms. 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 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.

**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.