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Top Ten Pest Control Mistakes to Avoid

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If a pet is a part of your family, then you know how important it is to treat for parasites and pests as well as fortify your home against invaders.

When your pet suffers from a parasitic infection, you might think the best solution is to quickly apply the strongest, fastest treatment as a cure. Unfortunately, applying these strong chemicals on your pet's body can cause their accidental poisoning.

Then there are those who believe their pet's good health will shield pests and parasites. A healthy pet may have a stronger immune system, but if your pet likes to be outside you should take extra steps to protect them.

Here are ten common mistakes you should avoid when thinking about protecting your pets against pests:

#10 Don't Treat Your Pet with Human Pest Repellent

If mosquitoes and heartworms are a concern, you might try to protect your pet by spraying them down with your mosquito repellent. But many insect sprays made for people contain DEET, a harmful chemical substance that can cause neurological damage and even poison your pet. Citronella is another substance that can cause respiratory and irritation problems if your pet accidentally breathes in the fumes, or if it is absorbed through their skin. Consult your veterinarian to get pet-specific mosquito and heartworm medication.

#9 Don't Leave Your Pet Defenseless by Not Treating Them At All

The best way to safeguard your pet is to consistently keep them treated against parasitic infections. If you keep up on your pet's grooming, vaccinations, and medications to combat flea, tick and other health dangers you won't have to scramble for a potentially dangerous last-minute cure.

#8 Don't Over- or Under-Treat Your Pet

If you discover your pet has fleas or ticks, one of the best methods to quickly eradicate them is to treat the infestation with a spot-on remedy. While this is a very effective treatment, the danger in using spot-ons to cure your pet is using the wrong dosage. The idea of "the stronger the dose, the better the cure" is not only wrong, it is dangerous for your pet. Doses are measured by weight and species, and if you treat your seven-pound cat with a dose meant for felines 10 pounds and heavier, you could poison or even kill your pet.

On the other hand, you may have gotten a spot-on pest remedy and decide to divide the dose to make it last longer. Doing this poses a danger to your pet as well because it won't cure your pet. Instead, it may weaken their immune system and make them even more susceptible to the parasites.

#7 Don't Give Your Pets Human Medicines Without Prior Veterinary Approval

As was mentioned earlier, health products designed for people can harm and in some cases prove fatally toxic to pets. If your pet is suffering from skin irritation, for example, you may be tempted to apply calamine lotion to soothe it, or give them diphenhydramine (such as Benadryl®). But remember, pets (especially cats) lick their fur, and could accidentally ingest a fatal toxin.

#6 Don't Mistake "Indoor" for "Safe"

If you have a pet that mostly stays indoors, you may not have to worry as much about a heartworm disease-carrying mosquito bite or ticks. But this doesn't mean you should ignore the possibility altogether, especially if your pet starts to show signs of infestation, such as chronic scratching or biting. After all, even though fleas don't stay on humans, they can still hitch a ride. Once these pests are inside your home, they are very difficult to get rid of.



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#5 When Treating Your Pet, Don't Ignore Their Favorite Hangouts

One of the biggest mistakes people make when they discover their pet has contracted parasites is to immediately apply a spot treatment on their pet, but then ignore their pets' favorite hangouts. This is especially true when it comes to fleas. If the spot-on or cleansing treatment you apply to your pet only kills adult fleas, guess what happens when they lay down in a flea-infested pet bed? Treat your entire home as well as your pet for pests to successfully get rid of them.

#4 Don't Assume a Holistic Product Won't Harm Your Pet

When it comes to combating pest infestations, there are a lot of alternative methods to choose from. But you should always check with a veterinarian before administering holistic products, such as essential oils, on your pet. Cats are especially prone to accidentally ingesting potentially harmful substances due to their grooming habits.

#3 No Visible Pest Problem? No Problem!

Keep your pet's vaccinations up-to-date and maintain a vigilant eye for such potential health hazards such as ticks, waterborne bacteria and canine [parvovirus](#) (a highly infectious virus transferred among dogs, especially during summer months). Don't ignore signs your pet is ill because you don't see any pests on them.

#2 Don't Let a Pest Infestation Become Intolerable Before Treating It

Some who have a pet in their home simply decide to "wait out" a pest infestation and hope that the cooler months will serve to eradicate a parasite problem in and around the home. By choosing to ignore a pest problem, you'll only ensure that you won't get rid of it. Just as ticks thrive if unchecked in a wooded environment outside the home, ridding the home of fleas takes several weeks. Don't think that the cool weather will take care of the problem for you.

#1 Don't Administer the Same Pest Control Products to Cats and Dogs

Besides the obvious difference you'll find in size, cats and dogs are two different species. Their differing physiology means, among other things, that medications you use on your dog should not be used on your cat, unless specifically instructed to by a veterinarian. This goes not only for internal medications, but external ones as well. Cats groom themselves by licking and ingesting loose fur; this puts felines at higher risk to accidentally ingest a poisonous product.

Always take your pets to their regular veterinary checkups so their vaccinations are up to date. Besides keeping your pet healthy as their first and best line of defense, your veterinarian will be able to give you pointers on how to avoid these common pest control mistakes.

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