

Australian National Kennel Council

Media Release

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Tick and flea season predicted to be the worst

The Australian National Kennel Council urges dog owners to prepare themselves and their dogs for one of the worst tick and flea seasons in memory. Extremes in weather conditions have resulted in perfect breeding conditions for ticks and fleas. Thorough examinations of dogs need to be carried out on a daily basis to avoid the potentially deadly consequences of tick paralysis, and to prevent flea infestations.

Owners can prepare by learning more about the dangers of ticks and fleas and learning how to check their dogs thoroughly for parasites. Ticks are blue-grey in colour, and can range from 3mm to 10mm in length. They are most commonly found around the head and neck, though can sometimes attach themselves in less obvious areas, including between toes and inside the ears.

Ticks inject toxins into the 'host' as they feed, causing paralysis. Early warning signs can include a visible weakness when standing and walking, and vomiting. As symptoms progress, dogs will overheat, pant rapidly, and collapse on their hind legs. Symptoms tend to progress at a faster rate in hot weather.

"Ticks can kill small animals and even larger ones. Tick prevention is crucial because the onset of paralysis and eventual death can occur very quickly. Ticks are very small, but can still have huge effects, even on big dogs. Dog owners must contact their vet as soon as a tick is found to make sure the toxin can be neutralised.", says veterinarian and Australian National Kennel Council spokesman **Dr Peter Higgins**.

"It is best to feel for a tick NOT look for one. If owners do find a tick NEVER apply metho or turps to the area as this will cause the tick to inject all its venom at once. Instead, remove it with a small pair of scissors and then get to the vet ASAP.", advises **Dr Higgins**.

Fleas can strike all year round, but thrive in warmer climates and in the summer months. Fleas not only cause severe skin problems and scratching but they can also cause blood loss in smaller dogs and puppies.

"Fleas breed in the environment. A dog is just a bus service for these little parasites. They get the Number 9 bus from the local park and have a meal while on board. So to be fully effective the environment, such as bedding and carpet, has to be treated as well as the dog.", says **Dr Higgins**.

Fleas are commonly found at the base of the tail, though they also like areas around the neck, ears, and legs. If fleas aren't visible, small black specks of digested blood may indicate a flea infestation. Female fleas can produce dozens of eggs a day, so a small problem can quickly become an infestation.

"It's a tough season ahead for dogs and dog owners throughout Australia this year. I strongly urge owners to take extra precautions and check their dogs regularly. It really is the case of a little bit of prevention stopping an enormous amount of heartache.", warns **Dr Higgins**.

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