

The Basset Hound Walkers

6 November 2013

Fleas v Frontline: who is winning?

In October 2013 I send round an email to all our group asking what they thought about Frontline. Apart from being very expensive I have found it quite ineffective as I have picked fleas off each of our hounds despite dosing them for three months running.

I have also found that the patent held by makers Merial on the active ingredient Fipronil, has expired so letting in others to market similar products. This has been done by Fiproguard in the States and sells for around half the price but in the UK, while hardly known, it costs about the same as Frontline. I have also heard reports that Bob Martin are marketing a similar product but no-one has reported back on its effectiveness.

I can also vouch that it is quite useless against ticks as you have to use this when travelling abroad. Last year in Provence we must have pulled off a dozen. We should also bear in mind that the pet press has reported the arrival of Super Fleas that are resistant: perhaps they're all living in North Curry.

So onto the responses from you: thank you for all those who replied.

“I work in a vets, we are changing our 'standard' flea product from Frontline combo to Activyl, as we are finding the Frontline isn't working so well anymore. The main difference between the two is that Activyl does not require the flea to bite the host before the product takes effect, where as the Frontline does. This is beneficial for animals who are allergic to flea bites as they suffer less biting and therefore scratching. It also works out to be cheaper than Frontline combo per vial.

Clients have said they are pleased with the results, as their animal stops scratching within a matter of hours and the flea infestations are more easily eradicated.

I hope this is of help to you?

Thanks

Laura Thistle”

“I found that Frontline wasn't working anymore, so I tried Advocate. Works a treat.”

Mark Richardson

“Absolutely Advocate and have used it for the last 4 years or so. Not cheap but it does really work as Baxter and Ruby can testify! Dorset dogs don't get fleas.

Cheers

Peter & Heidi Gorton

“Use Advocate with our boys, for some years now. No sign of any fleas. Very occasional tick, depending upon what undergrowth they scavenge through (ie heather/gorse on Dartmoor). Advocate particularly useful for protection if snails are

ingested as highly toxic. Mind you, neither hound seem that interested in these which are quite abundant in our courtyard (Yes, that includes Epic).

Downside is the cost.....not cheap!

Mike & Jacqie Chpman”

“We use Advocate and it's worth the price. Dave never had any fleas. We also use Advantix by Bayern and it helps to fight ticks. Dave used to have them, but problem gone since we start using Advantix. It protects from fleas as well and was recommended by our vet.

Magda”

“As you know not only am I a mad basset lady but I am also a vet. In addition I am also a practitioner with a GP certificate in dermatology and therefore see a lot of dogs and cats with skin problems. There are a huge range of skin diseases out there but by far the most common issue I see is pets with fleas. Often these are pets whose owners are treating them regularly for fleas but for one reason or another their treatment regime is ineffective. I have the "flea problem" conversation with my clients several times a day and I'm happy to pass on my advice and knowledge regarding Frontline, fleas and the multitude of flea products on the market. There are so many flea products available now that understandably owners can feel confused.

The first thing to say is that with all flea treatments you pay for what you get and the bob Martin spot on or Johnson's flea tablet you can pick up for very little in the supermarket is never going to be as effective as the prescription strength flea control you buy from your vet or pharmacist. The key to good flea control is to appreciate the flea's life cycle. The odd flea you may spot on your pet is only the tip of the iceberg. The majority of fleas live in the pets environment and for the vast majority of pet owners that means our houses. It doesn't matter if you have wooden, laminate, Lino, tiled or carpeted floors, fleas aren't fussy and will be present. Fleas lay huge numbers of eggs in the pets environment and once they mature these hatch out into a new generation of adults. Adult fleas only hop onto your pet to have a quick feed and then hop off again. Sometimes you won't even see adult fleas on your pet but they often leave behind flea dirt (their faeces) which contain digested blood. Flea dirt is visible by combing your pet with a fine toothed flea comb and looks like tiny coffee grounds. If you dampen these on a white tissue the tissue will turn a reddish brown colour, confirming the presence of digested blood and presence of flea activity. The reason that products bought from your vet are more expensive is that these products are prescription strength and don't just treat your pet they also are effective against the larvae and eggs found in the pets living quarters. Therefore you are controlling the problem from both sides. Supermarkets and pet shops are not licensed to sell prescription only drugs and their flea products are only at best going to be treating fleas that are on the pet. These fleas will quickly be replenished in number by the hatching out of their offspring! Thus the cycle continues. In cases where there is a heavy burden it is often necessary to use a household flea spray as well as a pet flea product to ensure good environmental control. Before doing this I recommend hoovering the house and turning on the heating for an hour before hand. The warmth and vibrations from hoovering encourage any larvae to hatch and you therefore get a better kill rate with the spray. Usually this only needs doing once every 6-12 months but you must do everywhere in the house and also your car.

It is also essential to treat all dogs and cats in the household at the same time. This avoids fleas taking up residence on a different pet.

With regard to Frontline this can be a confusing area. That's because Frontline is available in 2 forms, Frontline spot on and Frontline combo spot on. The latter is prescription only and treats both pet and household. Frontline spot on is the basic, cheaper version which can be bought without a prescription or pet health check from a petshop or supermarket or online. If you are using this product you won't be providing any environmental control and therefore your regime is likely to be ineffective in the face of flea challenge. The majority of owners who think that they have a flea resistance problem because they are already using Frontline actually don't. It's just that they are using the basic Frontline spot on rather than Frontline combo. When I've changed them onto Frontline combo and also got owners to treat their houses the problem usually resolves. Frontline does provide protection from ticks and so is very popular because of this. Just make sure you are buying Frontline combo to achieve the best flea control possible for your hound.

It is important to apply the product right down onto the pet's skin and not just onto the fur. Also don't bath or allow your pet to get wet for at least a week afterwards. The other important point is that all flea products are bodyweight dependent so it's essential you check that the product you are using is the right one for your pet's bodyweight. Again this is where a lot of owners go wrong. You can pay your pet for free at any time at your local surgery.

There are a huge number of other flea products available. Advocate is very good and as well as being a flea treatment also acts as a wormer and protects against lungworms which dogs can get from snails and slugs. It is supplied like Frontline to be applied on the back of the neck. It should be used every 28 days to ensure continuous control and if you employ this regime you only need to give a worming tablet every 6 months as opposed to every 3 months. Other spot on treatments I'd recommend include Advantage (fleas only), Stronghold (fleas, lice and mites), Advantix (fleas and ticks). For those who don't like applying dips, have young children or have pets who just love getting wet there is a relatively new product called Comfortis. This is a tablet which is effective against fleas only and is given monthly. Finally there is a fairly recent product called the Seresto collar which is prescription only and very effective at controlling fleas and ticks. This product lasts for 6 months.

Lastly, the products I've recommended are prescription only and therefore only available from your vet. You can ask your vet to do you a written prescription for a six month supply of any of these products which you can then source yourself from the pharmacist or an online pet pharmacy. Usually vets will charge a small fee for doing a written prescription but the overall cost may be reduced if you buy online etc. Of course an online supplier won't be able to give you the help, advice and support that your vet or vet nurse is qualified to do so perhaps this is worth bearing in mind!

I hope that this is useful and of help. I see so many clients at the end of their tethers because they have wasted money on ineffective flea treatments and still have an itchy, balding pet with sore skin. Usually this scenario could have been avoided by just asking their vets, vet nurse or even vet receptionist for advice in the first instance.

Kind regards,

Rachel Stewart “

“I seem to have been luckier this year than most. I have had ticks, some dead, some alive but not looking healthy!! I found one flea which Phoebe told me about and which I subsequently was able to catch and kill and I've not seen any since. I sprayed almost everything with flea spray - beds, cushions, carpets sofas etc., (even Pete!) I used Bob Martins spot-on drops (flea/tick) £1.99 from Home Bargains during the main part of the summer, earlier in the year I used flea collars also from Home Bargains - though I believe they are being slowly withdrawn (for dogs) for some reason or other, probably because they work!!!

Gay

“Hi Dave,

“We use Frontline and have done for years on dogs and cats (I've even used it on our chickens to get rid of mites)! We've found it really good. I agree that it is expensive, but we just accept it as we know that any trip to the vet is likely to cost in excess of £50 regardless of what we go in for! On the tick front, I have noticed that it doesn't stop them latching on but in our experience they tend to shrivel up and drop off pretty quickly if we haven't got to them first.

Regards

Dawn Rawlings, Brian and Henry”

“Hi Dave

A pet shop owner told me that the Bob Martin range has released a product that is the same as frontline (but much cheaper) since the patent expired. Haven't used it but interested to hear if anyone else has.

Mandy”

“Hello David, I recently had a long conversation with our vet about flea/parasite treatments. Apparently there is as yet no spot on treatment that works at preventing fleas AND ticks. The combo of chemicals for treating both would be too toxic for the dog to tolerate. So you have to choose which you want to prevent. Stronghold works for fleas and prazic works for ticks. I've heard Frontline no longer works as fleas are resistant to the chemical used in it.

The spot on treatments are carried across the surface of the dogs skin by dogs natural oils, so they won't work if applied on a recently washed dog as the natural oils will have been washed away in bathing.

Helpful advice from the vet - I wish their prices were as friendly!!!

Best wishes,

Caroline Lewis”

“Hello Dave

I was interested to read your email below about bloomin' fleas!!! We have had a similar experience in the past and used absolutely EVERYTHING. Finally we are now on top of the flea situation. We use a spray called Indorex through our whole house every three months:

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Indorex-Household-Spray-500ml-Fleas/dp/B001A363SO/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1381475051&sr=8-1&keywords=indorex

We concentrate mostly on Bramble's bed and the carpets. We also use the Advantage (by Bayer) as a spot on treatment for both the dog and the cat:

<http://www.petdrugsonline.co.uk/p-921-advantage-spot-on-flea-treatment.aspx>

The only problem is, that if you either need a prescription or have to buy it through the vets. But it is pricey. We have found that by doing both of these, our hound is flea free! Bramble has never had a tick in her life, but we usually walk on the beach every day, so I expect it would be different if we were out in the Country.

Hope this helps.

Anna-Louise”

“Hi Dave,

I used frontline it didn't work though there wasn't a flea on my hound and I think its mites he is sensitive too, I then tried advantage and same thing ...I'm slowly working my way through every product available. There is frontline plus that's supposed to do fleas and mites but I wouldn't trust it as there's a lot of bad press around frontline...I am using a raw meat diet with kibble as it can be diet sometimes responsible for skin irritation, would be very interested to know your findings from others

Many thanks from *Emma*.

Ps I found out you can use olive oil on ticks and they slip off look it up on line Also you can use olive oil in there ears to clean out as it actually kills and rids of ear mites.”

“<http://www.petdrugsonline.co.uk/>

or try mole valley farmers [over the counter in store rather than the mole care vet] as they are cheaper than getting it from the vets :) hope this helps , i use a seresto flea collar[dont get from mole valley vet as £10 more than moorgate vets, they are expensive but they last for 9 months and i havent had a tick or flea since using them over a year ago now.

Chris Dodd”

“Hello Dave

Interesting read

My vets, who still sell Frontline, recently reluctantly agreed with me that it is pretty useless for fleas and totally useless for ticks which seem to have become quite resistant. They now also sell something else (Advocate?) but is even more expensive and covers fleas and worms but not ticks. Denise's vets in Marlborough recommend Advantix

(again pricey and prescription only) but we tried it and it seemed to work - especially the ticks which we get in abundance here in the forest.

In general i use a tick picker for the nasty blighters and Frontline spray (not the silly pipettes) for fleas.

I'll be interested if anyone else has found a solution as the costs of flea/ tick/ various worms treatment for a dog and 2 cats is getting prohibitive.

Cheers

Dianne Billing