

# Flea & Tick Compliance: Turning Expectations into Reality

Flea and tick prevention is an essential part of veterinary medicine and pet care, but despite clinicians' best efforts, owner compliance continues to be an issue. Although cost and frequency of administration can affect owner compliance, lack of owner knowledge regarding the dangers of fleas and ticks and when their pets are at risk may play an even larger role in compliance failures.<sup>1</sup> To turn compliance expectations into reality, clinicians must recognize the barriers to compliance and find ways to meet these challenges.

## Compliance Barriers

Evaluation of pet owner purchasing patterns of flea and tick prevention has shown that owners rarely purchase enough medication to provide consistent, year-round coverage for their pet.<sup>2</sup> In a recent study, >500 dog owners in 24 clinics across the United States were surveyed<sup>2</sup>; despite recommendations for year-round prevention, only 73% of owners believed that year-round prevention was necessary. The average owner bought only 6.1 months of prevention, with only 13% of owners purchasing a year's supply of medication.

Even after purchasing medications with the best of intentions, owners may fail to administer preventives, which may occur for many reasons (eg, forgetfulness, confusion regarding flea and tick seasonality, difficulty administering medication).

## Turning Expectations into Reality

Educating owners on the importance of regular, consistent flea and tick prevention is an essential step to achieving compliance and overcoming purchasing barriers.<sup>1</sup> Proper education, including messaging from the entire practice team, can be built into routine appointments to reinforce the importance of flea and tick prevention. Perception of necessity, along with cost, has been shown to be vital to follow-through in human medication purchases.<sup>3</sup> Successful education efforts should be followed up by sending owners home with preventives after every routine appointment.

Convenience can address key barriers to administration. Studies have shown that inconvenient routes of administration and more frequent administration are associated with poor compliance, whereas less frequent administration has been associated with higher compliance rates.<sup>4-6</sup> Preventive products that have convenient dosing and administration may promote successful and timely administration, improving compliance once the medication is purchased.<sup>3</sup>

Seresto®, a slow-release imidacloprid/flumethrin collar that provides flea and tick prevention for 8 months, can help break the barriers of cost, convenience, and ease of administration, all while maintaining high standards of efficacy.<sup>7,8</sup> Collar placement is simple and can be done during the appointment, eliminating any potential owner concerns regarding proper placement. Mid-year rechecks can also be encouraged to alleviate owner concerns regarding potentially missing prevention doses and help owners feel confident that prevention is under the supervision of the clinician.

## Conclusion

Clinicians must recognize that compliance barriers may cause flea and tick prevention to fall short of their expectations and that these barriers will vary among pet owners. Clinicians should communicate with owners to identify the individual barriers and tailor their recommendations to overcome them. By employing concerted education efforts and preventive products that remove the guesswork of compliance, clinicians may turn their compliance expectations into realities. ■

## References

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