

If there is one overriding truth about veterinary medicine it is that things constantly change. This seems especially true the past few years. From dental care to orthopedic surgery to pain management, the advances being made in animal medicine are both exciting and challenging...to keep up with I mean.

Well it seems the folks that make flea control products do not want to be left out. At last count, at least six new products have hit the market in the past year or so. No longer are there just a few well known products on the market like Advantage®, Frontline® and Sentinel®. Recently companies like Fort Dodge, Summit, Novartis, Ely Lilly, and others have rolled out major marketing campaigns for products with odd names like Promeris®, Vectra 3D®, and Comfortis® to name a few.

The timing of these campaigns is no chance event. Even though fleas are seen year round in most temperate climates like ours, the average dog and cat owner (read: “flea product purchaser”) still views the warmer longer days of summer as the “flea season”. Some flea control products expand their spectrum to include ticks; others add mosquito repellent agents as well to address those summertime pest concerns for pet owners

I haven’t met a veterinarian yet who is well versed on all these new products. Naturally, veterinarians want to be sure that the products they recommend are safe and effective. These new products may very well turn out to be wonderful new additions to our flea and tick control efforts. But some practices, our group included, have taken a wait and see attitude about the new products.

I’m reminded of the old adage: “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”. The “old standbys” continue to be excellent products that work well for most dogs and cats in our area. Each has its strong and weak points, but when used appropriately perform well, and are safe. I listen to these marketing campaigns with a mix of interest and skepticism, and recommend others do so also. This is usually a wise approach with any new product or drug. Just this spring one of these new products, Promeris, was implicated in some fairly serious reactions in dogs, not to mention having an offensive smell to some dog owners. Additionally, some of these products are intended for use in dogs only (Vectra-3D, Comfortis, and Promeris-Dog) and some worry that inadvertent use in cats, with bad consequences, is inevitable.

My advice on these products is to take it slow, use the products your veterinarian is familiar with and recommends. With time we will know if these new products are all they are touted to be. Also important, don’t wait for your pet to begin itching or to see fleas on your pet to start a flea control program. That approach only guarantees several months of catch up work to regain the upper hand on these pesky pests. Again, your veterinarian is your best and most reliable resource for information about flea control products-both new and old.

*Dr. John Huebner is a graduate of the School of Veterinary Medicine at UC Davis and practices companion animal medicine at Redwood Veterinary Hospital in Vallejo, CA. You can send your comments or pet health questions to Dr. Huebner at 731 Admiral Callaghan Lane Vallejo, Ca 94591, or e-mail him at [jvhuebner@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jvhuebner@sbcglobal.net)*