

Did a topical flea control product cause my cat's asthma-like reaction?

CatChannel veterinary expert, Arnold Plotnick, DVM, advises calling the manufacturer and monitoring your cat after dispensing a topical flea treatment.

By Arnold Plotnick, DVM

Posted: September 19, 2008 3 a.m. EDT

Q: I have a 9 month-old Pixie-Bob. His dad was full Pixie-Bob and his mom was a farm cat, but he has every characteristic of the breed. He is the most amazing cat. However, I applied one of the new topical flea control products six weeks ago to my cat, on the recommendation of my vet, and he had a horrible reaction during the night, like an asthma attack. I was so worried. I have never had a cat do that. Should I try a different brand?

A: I have prescribed many different brands of monthly topical parasite control products, and have never had any of my patients exhibit the type of reaction that you witnessed with your cat. At most, I've seen some cats develop some skin irritation at the site where the product was applied. All of these topical products have undergone extensive testing and evaluation, and are very safe.

It is difficult to say conclusively whether the asthma-type incident that your cat experienced was related to the new flea control product. I would call the manufacturer (they usually have a telephone number for customer concerns on the package) and ask if they've received similar types of complaints.

I've dispensed hundreds of doses of Frontline, and have found it to be exceptionally safe. Although I don't endorse any one particular product, I can vouch for the safety of Frontline, and I think it would be unlikely that your cat would suffer a similar reaction. To be safe, though, you should consider applying the product in the morning on a day when you can monitor your cat for any adverse reactions.