

Bug Off

Take the bite out of fleas and ticks.

By Rebecca Sweat

They might be small, they might even seem harmless, but fleas and ticks certainly are nothing to ignore.

“Fleas multiply fast, and it doesn’t take but one or two to set up an infestation in a very short period of time,” says Roberta Lillich, DVM, president of the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) and a cats-only veterinarian in Abilene, Kan.

Fleas feed on the blood of cats and other warm-blooded animals, using their specialized mouth parts to pierce the skin and draw out blood. Once bitten, a cat might feel itchy and frantically scratch itself or chew on its skin.

“When fleas bite, they leave behind their saliva, and that contains a protein which many cats are allergic to,” Lillich explains. Excessive scratching can result in bleeding, skin inflammation, infections and even permanent hair loss. If enough fleas attack and too much blood is lost, it can lead to anemia, especially in kittens.

[Click here to read CatChannel’s exclusive quiz on preventing fleas and ticks.](#)

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