

Getting the Word Out About Pets, Parasites

The Companion Animal Parasite Council Road Show makes a stop in Sacramento.

By Marissa Heflin

Posted: July 9, 2009, 3 a.m. EDT

The CAPC recommends that cat and dog owners use preventive medicine year-round to control internal and external parasites. The Companion Animal Parasite Council Education Road Show made a stop July 7 in Sacramento, Calif., in its traveling effort to educate pet owners and families about zoonotic diseases and how to prevent them.

The West Coast tour began June 27 in Denver and has since visited San Diego, Long Beach, Calif., and San Francisco. The tour ends July 11 in Seattle, where the American Veterinary Medical Association conference will take place.

"[The road show] has been really fun," said Michael Paul, DVM, executive director of the CAPC. "It's even better than last year."

To up its efforts, the CAPC this year partnered with more local nonprofit animal welfare groups to help facilitate pet adoptions at the various tour stops. The group also incorporated a computerized survey to get a better understanding of what pet owners really think about parasite prevention.

It turns out that about 50 percent to 60 percent of the pet owners Dr. Paul has spoken to over the course of the tour are already using some kind of preventative. However, he said, pet owners are not administering preventatives year-round, which is a problem.

"There are parasites and zoonotic disease, sometimes a higher-than-expected incidence, in every Western city on our Road Show schedule," Paul said. "Parasites can be found in all 50 states, every day of the year, regardless of the weather."

Heartworm and other common parasitic diseases were virtually nonexistent in the West 50 years ago, according to the CAPC. However, the changing landscape and influx of people from different parts of the country help these diseases spread more rapidly. Many people relocating to the West bring cats and dogs that have parasites, the CAPC said.

The CAPC recommends that pet owners use preventive medicine year-round to control internal and external parasites for the life of their cat or dog, no matter where they live.

Road show sponsors include Bayer Animal Health, Idexx Laboratories, Merial Ltd., Novartis Animal Health, Pfizer Animal Health, Fort Dodge Animal Health, Eli Lilly and Co., Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health, Summit VetPharm, VCA Antech and Virbac Animal Health.