

NEW RESEARCH REVEALS GAPS IN PARASITE PREVENTION

Research commissioned by MSD Animal Health has revealed that most dog owners aren't aware of the need for year-round treatment against fleas and ticks

While the dog-owners surveyed generally had a good awareness of the need to protect their animals against fleas and ticks, only half of those questioned said that their vets recommended year-round flea and tick control. One in three said they had previously found a tick on their dog, while one in five owners reported seeing a flea on their dog in the last year.

Almost two-thirds admitted to sometimes or often forgetting to give treatment. Over half of respondents (58%) said that they didn't receive a regular reminder from their vet about flea treatment, but over 50% also said that they would be more likely to treat if prompted by a reminder service.

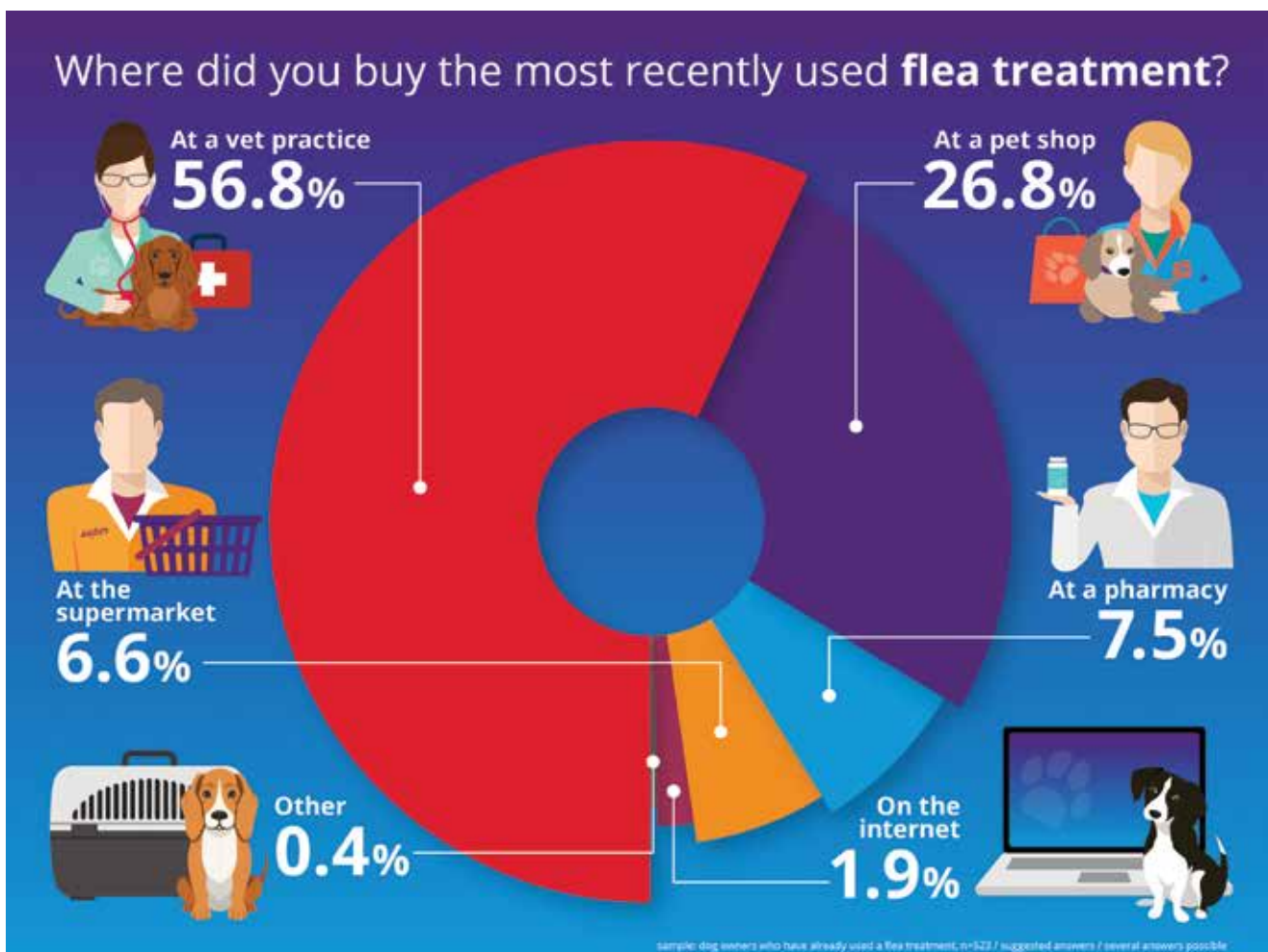
The all-Ireland research (Biosat, December 2018) surveyed 540 dog owners about their awareness of common parasites in dogs, as well as their behaviours in relation to the treatment of their pets for parasites.

The survey suggested that the message about the presence

of immature stages of the flea life cycle throughout the home is also not getting through, as over half of those questioned were unaware that 95% of a flea infestation – flea eggs, larvae and pupae – will be in the home, with only 5% of the problem visible on the affected pet. With 63% allowing their pet to sleep or lie on their sofa, and 37% on their bed, this problem is further highlighted. However, over half said that being made aware of these facts about a flea infestation would prompt them to take more regular action against parasites.

When asked about where they typically buy flea and tick treatment for their pet, 80% of owners said that, while their vet is the main source of advice, only 57% bought their most recent flea treatment from a vet practice; 26% of dog-owners bought treatment from a pet store; 6% from a supermarket; and less than 2% online.

More than two-thirds of those interviewed said they would prefer to give a long-lasting (12-week) flea and tick treatment



1 in 3
owners has found
a tick on their pet



with a separate worming tablet rather than giving a flea and tick treatment every month.

Kevin Whelan, companion animal marketing manager, MSD Animal Health said, it is clear that communication and advice from the vet has a big role to play in how often dog-owners are treating their pets against parasites.

"With only 52% of respondents indicating that their vet recommends year-round treatment against fleas and ticks, there is a huge opportunity for vets to help increase awareness and plug this gap. The findings also confirm that a regular reminder service from vets would help prompt people to act and treat their pets more frequently.

"It is also interesting that while dog owners look to their vets as a main source of advice, they are significantly less likely to buy products from their vet. This shows that there is an opportunity for vets to enhance the perceived value of buying products from the vet practice.

"The convenience and frequency of administering treatment was also of considerable interest to respondents, with over two-thirds saying they would prefer a flea treatment which lasted three months compared to one that lasts just a month." Stressing to dog owners the importance of protecting themselves and their family, as well as their dog, is essential, according to Mr Whelan.

"Many people don't realise that 95% of a flea infestation is in the home and it can be very tricky to get rid of these unwelcome visitors once they have started to spread. Whenever pets are frequently lying and sleeping on sofas and beds in the home, the need to protect against fleas on an ongoing basis is evident."

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH INCLUDE:

- 65% of owners admit to sometimes or often forgetting to give flea treatment;
- 58% of owners said that they didn't receive a reminder from their vet re flea/tick treatment;
- One in five owners reported seeing a flea on their dog in the last year;
- One in three dog owners has found a tick on their dog;
- After discovering that 95% of a flea infestation (flea eggs, larvae and pupae) is in the home, and with only 5% of the problem (adult fleas) visible on the affected pet, 54.5% of respondents said it made them more likely to take steps to regularly treat their pet to prevent a flea infestation;
- More than two thirds interviewed would prefer to give a long-lasting (12 weeks) flea and tick treatment with a separate worming tablet than give a flea and tick treatment every month
- 80% of owners said that their vet is the main source of advice, but only 57% bought their most recent flea treatment from a vet practice;
- 44% of owners say their dog gets wet at least once a week;
- Over half of owners aren't aware of the zoonotic risks of roundworm, and only 28% treat their pet four or more times a year;
- Only 37% of respondents were aware that Lyme disease affects dogs;
- The average number of times per year that respondents treated their pet against fleas was 3.4
- The average no of times per year that respondents treated their pet against worms was 3.2
- One in three dog owners also owns a cat