

16  
Jun

## Pesticide Incident Prompts Dog Owner Warning about Flea and Tick Chemicals

(*Beyond Pesticides*, June 15, 2020) A dog owner in southern Florida is warning other owners about the safety of flea and tick medication after his dog suffered a seizure and lost mobility in her back legs. As reported by [CBS WINK](#), owner Joe Brewster switched to the product [PetArmor Plus for Dogs](#), manufactured by Sergeant's Pet Care Products, Inc., just three days before his dog, Buddha, suffered a seizure. "They asked me if I changed flea and tick medication," Mr. Brewster told WINK news. "And I thought for a minute, and I go, 'Yeah, three days before.'"



Although the type of event experienced by Buddha was characterized by veterinarians and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as rare, the onset of neurological problems is a serious issue that could be indicative of future health impacts on pet owners. According to a recent study, [dogs can act as sentinel species for chemical-induced human diseases](#).

Wendy Mandese, PhD, a veterinarian and professor at the University of Florida told reporters, "We may see an animal that has an issue one or two times a year." However, EPA told WINK news that over the last decade, it received over 1,300 reports of pesticide incidents involving pets, and 67 involving humans after the use of PetArmor products. While these incidents may be spread throughout the entire country, and any one individual veterinarian may see a few per year, at a national level these numbers point to a problem with the underlying regulations that allow toxic flea and tick products onto market.

The active ingredients in PetArmor plus are [fipronil](#) and [methoprene](#), both of which are commonly found in many pet flea and tick treatments. Methoprene is an insect growth regulator that can cause vomiting dilated pupils, behavioral changes, and breathing problems in dogs. Studies on laboratory animals found indications of delayed development from methoprene exposure. [Past incident reports associated with fipronil](#) treatments on dogs found exposure to result in skin irritation, lethargy, incoordination, dilated pupils, facial swelling and convulsions. In laboratory animals, the chemical causes aggressive behavior, kidney damage, and changes in thyroid functioning. Fipronil has a long residual time, and can remain on pets nearly two months after an application. Human exposure is associated with neurotoxicity, kidney and liver damage, skin irritation, eye damage, reproductive impacts and cancer. There is no available data on the hazards associated with combining methoprene, fipronil, and inert ingredients in a formulation.

Given the association between product ingredients and convulsions, Mr. Brewster told WINK that he believed the flea package should let pet owners know that a risk of seizure is possible. "This isn't right. This is animal abuse, basically," Mr. Brewster told reporters. "They shouldn't be using this in flea and tick medication if it's bad for pets."

Although the risk of adverse effects is spread out throughout the country, a health scare with one's pet is a frightening situation, and if provided a complete understanding of the hazards a product can cause, many pet owners are unlikely to place their pet in potential danger. This is especially true given the effectiveness of alternative approaches to flea and tick management.

Pets should be regularly checked for ticks using a flea/tick comb available at most pet stores. Best practice is to check a pet each time they have been outdoors, or at least twice a week. Areas behind the ears and between toes are often places that ticks will hide – so make sure to be thorough. Be careful not to break off any embedded ticks, and remove any found ticks in the same way described for humans.

If your pet has fleas, daily combing is necessary, with an intermittent dunk in soapy water to kill and remove fleas. You can speak with your veterinarian about receiving vitamin B-complex supplements, which can reduce the frequency of flea bites. Oftentimes, fleas vectors come not from within a house but outside on a lawn. An application of beneficial nematodes can kill fleas on a lawn naturally to prevent re-infestation and spread to other pet owners.

For more information about managing fleas and ticks without the use of hazardous chemicals that can harm your pets, see Beyond Pesticides Managesafe pages on [tick](#) and [flea](#) control.

*All unattributed positions and opinions in this piece are those of Beyond Pesticides.*

Source: [CBS WINK Southwest Florida](#)

Like

Tweet

