

HOLISTIC DISEASE PREVENTION FOR DOGS



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VACCINES & TITRE TESTING

You want your pet to be healthy and safe from the risk of infectious disease.

You don't want your dog to get sick with Parvovirus.

Responsible vaccine protocols help protect our pets from potentially nasty infectious diseases. But there are also downsides to unnecessary vaccines, some of which can be quite serious.

At The Natural Vets, we make sure your pet is protected from contagious disease. And we do this with a minimal vaccine protocol! We can reduce the number of vaccines your pet receives and still be certain your pet is protected against contagious disease. How? By checking your pet's immune status with a blood test – something most other vets don't offer.



What is a Minimal Vaccine Protocol?

Many dogs immunised with C3 vaccines (covering them for Distemper, Parvovirus & Infectious Hepatitis) are fully protected against these illnesses for their lifetime. Without booster vaccines.

The minimum duration of protective immunity in an immunised animal is three years. This means that once pups have received their course of core vaccines they may not need the C3 'booster' ever again.

How can we be sure? We check their immune response with blood tests at set intervals.

Why Minimise Vaccines?

Vaccine 'boosters' in an immunised animal do not boost their immune protection at all. But they can cause side effects.

Vaccine adverse events in pets may be as mild as a 24 hour fever post-vaccine, or as serious as fatal immune-mediated illness.

Administering unnecessary vaccines to your pet can cause:

- *fever*
- *stiffness & sore joints*
- *allergies*
- *increased susceptibility to infection*
- *thyroid disease*
- *autoimmune attack of the body's red blood cells or platelets causing life-threatening collapse*
- *seizures and other diseases of the nervous system*
- *aggressive vaccine-site tumours*

Pretty serious stuff hey? And that's why we prefer to give only what is necessary to protect your pet.

How does a Minimal Vaccine Protocol look?

At The Natural Vets we follow this protocol for dogs:

Puppies receive two C3 vaccines around 8 and 12 weeks of age. We then do a blood test at 16 weeks of age to be sure they are fully protected. We cannot do this test any earlier - it may not be accurate.

We administer the Kennel Cough vaccine as an intranasal squirt at the 16 week visit. This way your pup doesn't ever receive more than 3 vaccines at once. Less vaccines in one hit means side effects are much less likely.

The blood test result is available within 10 days.

If your pup fails their titre test we give a third booster. Then we repeat the blood test 2 weeks later to be sure they have responded. Less than 5% of puppies fail the test.

12 months later the blood test is done again. This assures us that your pet is still protected. Your pup at this stage is still in the high-risk age group for Parvovirus. Most parvovirus cases occur in puppies <6 months of age, and are rare beyond the age of 2.

Their antibody result determines whether we need to administer a booster vaccine. Most of the time we don't. Then your pet needs a blood test again in three years time.

Dogs needing cover for Kennel Cough have boosters every 12 months - this is a short-lived vaccine.

Other vaccines (for example for Leptospirosis) are only recommended in high-risk areas.

Monitoring Vaccine Response with Titre Tests

The blood test is a titre test that any Veterinarian can run. It measures your dog's antibody status.

The titre tests we routinely run in dogs are for Distemper and Parvovirus. There is also a titre test available for Infectious Hepatitis, but this is not usually needed.

We send our titre test samples to a laboratory in Western Australia. The report reveals your pet's level of immune protection, and how high this level is. It can take up to 10 days to receive the result.

If antibodies are detected, your pet is immune.

We use titre tests to assess immune protection both after a vaccine and at intervals throughout your pet's life. Most of the time results prove booster shots to be unnecessary. A stable antibody titre will likely remain constant for many years. In an adult pet with proven immunity we repeat the blood test every three years.

We have never seen a pet that has demonstrated immunity fall ill with the disease in question.

Occasionally we find a low titre result. Booster vaccination decisions are then based on a pet's risk vs benefit assessment.

Does your pet go to boarding kennels?

Some kennels will not accept a titre test report. We can recommend local kennels that do. Dogs still need Kennel Cough cover to attend kennels. We use an intranasal vaccination (a small squirt up the nose) which in our experience is very safe (safer than the injectable option).

HEARTWORM PREVENTION DECISIONS

We want your pets protected against parasites and diseases. And we also strive to minimise the chemical load your pet has to deal with. Decisions around chemical preventatives is a balancing act.

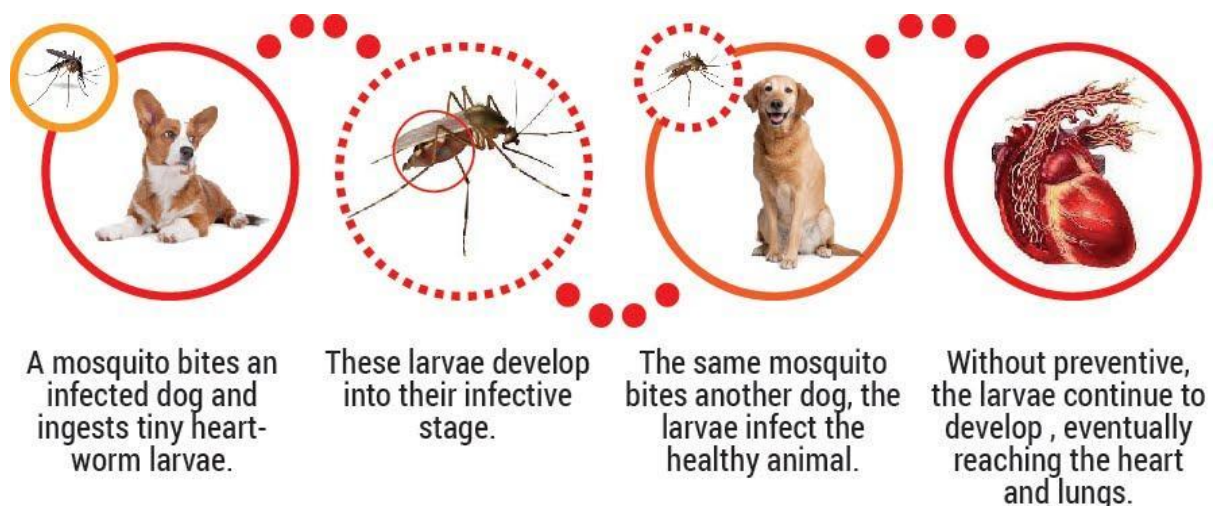
Understanding Heartworm - Fast Facts

Do you know how heartworm spreads? Mosquitoes! Heartworm larvae (baby heartworms) live in the blood of an infected dog who is hosting both a male and female heartworm (both need to be present to make babies!). Feeding mosquitoes suck up the larvae. They can then infect other dogs through their blood-sucking bites!

Transmitted larvae enter the bloodstream then migrate to the heart vessels. They develop into adult worms over a period of 6-8 months.

Adult heartworms can live for three to five years, with males attaining a length of 17cm and females 27cm (which is a big worm to live inside a small heart!).

If male and female worms are both present, they mate and produce babies (larvae). Larvae can live in the dog's blood for up to two years.



Winter Arrest (no hand-cuffs required)

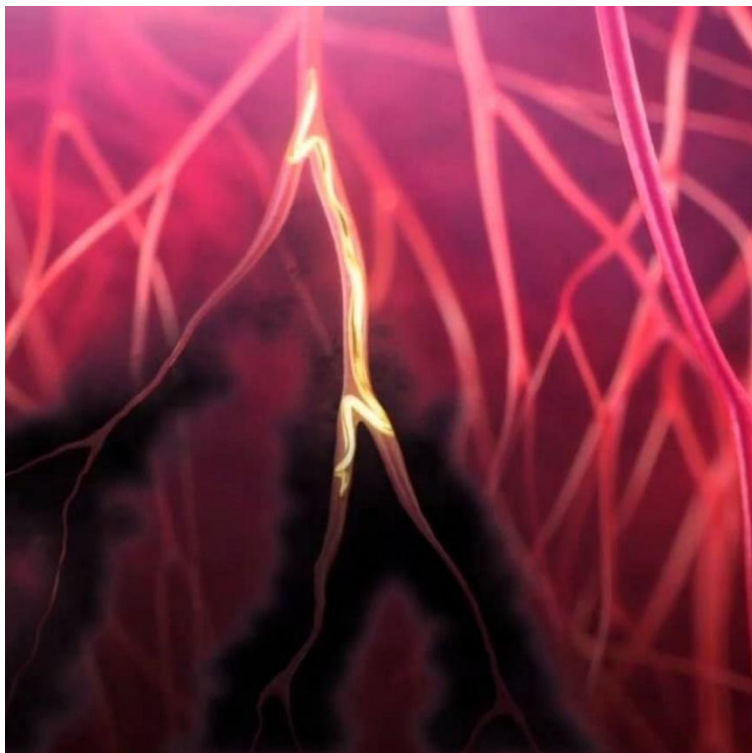
For larvae to develop inside the mosquito, temperatures must be over 14°C, day and night, for at least 8 days. Development to the infective stage requires steady 24-hour daily temperatures over 18°C for approximately one month.

This means that a cold snap causes arrested development. (Without a hip-hop soundtrack though.) Until it warms up again.

The lifespan of larvae inside the mosquito is 30 days so if temperatures haven't been high enough in this period they die.

Some people stop giving heartworm preventatives over winter. This requires careful monitoring of temperature trends. In some geographical areas pets may not need heartworm prevention year-round.

What Heartworm Disease Does (The Silent Assassin)



Heartworms can cause severe heart disease and death in some animals. Especially if they go undetected for long enough. Symptoms of early disease include a mild cough or reduced exercise tolerance. If noted and heartworm found, treatment is usually safe and effective. If you ignore or miss early symptoms heartworm disease becomes more serious. At this stage it is difficult to treat and can be fatal.

Your Dog's Infection Risk

Infection rates are higher in warm, coastal areas where mosquitoes proliferate. Queensland has the highest rates of infection within Australia (particularly northern Qld).

Wildlife such as foxes can act as a reservoir for infection. This maintains an endemic source of infection in some areas.

The risk of a dog contracting heartworm infection relates to geographical location. If you live in a warm, humid, coastal area, with temperatures over 18C most of the year, and mosquitoes, exposure to heartworm is likely.

This includes our otherwise idyllic Sunshine Coast area. Pets here are at risk of contracting heartworm. Other areas of Australia may be lower or higher risk.

Chemical Preventatives

Where heartworm disease occurs, we recommend using pharmaceutical heartworm preventatives. They are the only proven method of prevention.

Heartworm preventatives are insecticides that circulate in your dog's blood. They prevent injected larvae from developing into adult worms.

The most common preventative drugs for heartworm are:

- *moxidectin (Proheart long-acting injection, Advocate top-spot)*
- *milbemycin (Interceptor, Sentinel, Milbemax, Panoramis – all oral monthly tablets/chews)*
- *ivermectin (Valueheart, Heartgard – monthly tablets/chews)*
- *selamectin (Revolution top-spot).*

These are generally safe and effective at the doses used for heartworm prevention. Most young healthy animals tolerate these preventatives very well. There are rare exceptions. Possible side effects include depression, lethargy, vomiting, anorexia, diarrhoea, blindness, loss of balance, staggering, and convulsions.

Interceptor, Sentinel and Milbemax have excellent safety profiles with very few adverse reactions. Valuheart (the only oral product that treats heartworm only) is also a very safe option.

Some pet owners prefer the annual heartworm needle (Proheart SR-12 injection). This is a slow-release depot injected yearly targeting heartworm. It is usually well tolerated by young healthy pets.

If your animal has liver or kidney disease, or is battling cancer, chemical preventatives may not be suitable.

Modified Use of Heartworm Preventatives

Pharmaceutical heartworm preventatives are the most effective form of protection currently available. You can minimise their use and still effectively protect your dog against heartworm.

Drug approval studies show that Heartgard, Interceptor, Sentinel, Panoramis and Revolution provide heartworm protection beyond 30 days. It may be safe to use heartworm preventatives less frequently than every 30 days. We do not recommend stretching the dosage interval beyond 45 days. Supervise after administering to be sure the medication is not spat out or later vomited.

Lower doses of some heartworm preventatives can prevent heartworm infection. Please discuss a lowered dosage regime with one of our vets.

If your dog develops a heartworm infection on preventatives used according to label directions, the company will pay for treatment. This is not the case if you are using the medication other than as directed on the label. Manufacturers only honour guarantees when products are bought from a Veterinarian and given year-round according to label instructions.

Holidaying in Heartworm Areas

If you live in a very low risk area you may not be using heartworm preventatives. But what if you travel to or visit a higher-risk area with your pet? Ensure you start a preventative within 45 days of travelling and continue until you return home. If travelling for less than a month, only one dose may be required.

Natural Alternatives

Natural alternatives for heartworm prevention are available. According to anecdotal evidence these alternatives may be effective. There are no studies proving this and the level of cover comes with no guarantee.



We do not recommend sole reliance on natural preventatives for heartworm prevention.

If you use a natural preventatives only, we recommend these protective measures:

- *avoid walking your pet in mosquito-infested areas*
 - *avoid walking at times when mosquitoes are most active*
 - *apply a natural insect repellent before walks*
- (our 'Don't Let the Bugs Bite' repellent is a suitable option).

Heartworm Tests

If you are not using chemical heartworm preventatives, or using them other than as per label instructions, your pet needs regular heartworm tests. We check your pet's heartworm status and can detect most infections early.

Heartworm infection is detectable 6 months after mosquito transmission. The test identifies adult female heartworms but may not detect very low numbers. It cannot detect male heartworms.

Using natural methods of prevention only? We recommend heartworm tests twice yearly throughout your pet's life.

If you stray from labelled dosage / intervals, we recommend a heartworm test yearly.

If you give preventatives year round a heartworm test every two to three years is advisable.

Routine testing enables earlier detection. When treatment is safer and more likely to be effective.

Holistic Heartworm Prevention Protocol

To summarise, a suggested Holistic Heartworm Prevention protocol is as follows:

Choose drugs with a minimal, targeted action ('Valueheart' monthly tablet or 'Proheart' injection). Or drugs with an excellent safety profile such as 'Interceptor' or 'Sentinel'. Side note - the safe flea control agent in Sentinel reduces reliance on other flea chemicals. A great option if fleas are a challenge.

Reduced dosages and/or increased dosage intervals are optional. Be aware that 'off-label' use voids the product guarantee.

If your pet is sensitive to chemicals or has liver or kidney disease or cancer, consider natural preventatives. Remember that this option comes with no guarantees.

And finally, have your dog tested for heartworm at appropriate intervals:

- *twice yearly if not using a conventional preventative or when relying on herbal preventatives*
- *yearly if using chemical preventatives off-label*
- *every three years if using chemical preventatives according to label instructions.*

INTESTINAL PARASITES

Pets can harbour worms and single-cell protozoal parasites (like Coccidia and Giardia) in their gut. These parasites can infect your pet via many routes.

If you have children in the home or visiting, we recommend you regularly deworm your pet. Some parasites can spread to humans, and children are most at-risk.

Consider one of the options discussed above and follow the recommended label dose. Or you can give deworming tablets on a routine basis (every 3 months).

Note that deworming does disrupt the gut microbiome. We recommend you supplement with a probiotic that feeds the gut and its immune system. Discuss product recommendations with our team.

Natural Alternatives

If you have a pet that doesn't tolerate deworming medications we can offer natural solutions.



This is our recommended protocol:

- *Sucker Punch herbal liquid in food once weekly (safe to use from 10 weeks of age)*
- *Freeloaders Be Gone homeopathic booster once weekly on gums (safe from birth)*
- *Probiotic powder used year-round to support gut health*
- *Feed a natural diet high in 'broom foods' eg pumpkin seeds, parsley leaf, grated carrot, papaya.*

Routine Testing

We track your pet's parasite burden with regular stool tests. This is essential if using natural alternatives.

Any vet clinic can do this simple test. Drop a fresh stool sample off for a 'faecal float' test. We can also provide home sample kits for you to send your pet's sample straight to our laboratory.

Test adult pets should at least twice yearly (more often if a history of parasite issue)

Test puppies monthly.

And Don't Forget Real Food!

Parasites are opportunistic invaders. When the body is healthy there is less chance of invasion. Strong stomach acid keeps parasites at bay. Dry processed foods weaken stomach acid! Feed a raw, balanced, natural diet. It supports your pet's gut health, immune system, well-being and vitality! If your pet isn't already eating real food we can help you with the transition.

DREADED TICKS

We live in an area where paralysis ticks are prevalent. Tick paralysis can be life-threatening and is one of the most common preventable causes of death in Aussie dogs and cats.



'Tick season' is generally the warmer months when ticks are more prevalent and active. Sometimes we see cases of tick paralysis throughout the cooler months as well.

What is Tick Paralysis?

Paralysis ticks attach to host animals and while feeding secrete a toxin into the blood.

Paralysis ticks live on native Australian marsupials such as bandicoots, macropods and possums. These animals have developed immunity to the toxin. Our domestic pets have not. If a tick attaches to your pet paralysis will occur within 3 days.

Signs of Tick Paralysis

The tick toxin interferes with how the nerves communicate with muscles. Often the first sign in dogs is a change in the sound of their bark, and regurgitation of food and drink. Their gait becomes wobbly. Within a short period of time they are completely paralysed and unable to walk at all or even sit themselves up.

Cats usually present with different symptoms. They may be agitated and have a funny breathing pattern. You might hear an audible grunt. Weakness is usually less obvious in the early stages.

Within a short time (hours) the respiratory muscles become paralysed. This is the usual cause of death. Animals with advanced respiratory symptoms are the most difficult to treat. And ticks can also paralyse young livestock like goats and alpacas.

Identify and Remove Paralysis Ticks!

Paralysis ticks have a silvery grey body and legs close to their mouthparts. As they feed they enlarge and the body can appear quite dark in colour.

Most ticks attach towards the front end – around the head, ears, mouth, neck, chest or under the arms. But you can find them anywhere.

If you find a tick on your pet, remove it immediately. Slip a fingernail or tick detacher underneath the head and pull backward with a quick twist.

Treating Tick Paralysis

Treatment of tick paralysis in the early stages is usually straight forward. Most healthy animals recover from mild paralysis.

Treatment is more difficult if your pet is older, has heart or lung issues, or is severely affected. Pets with respiratory symptoms are more difficult to treat.

Critical patients need 24-hour care at a specialist facility. They may need to go on a ventilator to ensure survival and the prognosis for recovery may be poor.

Preventing Tick Paralysis

Tick Paralysis is preventable when effective methods are in place. No single product or method carries a 100% guarantee. We recommend a multi-modal barrier system.

Dr Renee talks about this in [this podcast](#).

There are many preventatives available. Some chemical options are not well tolerated, and some can have serious side effects.

When deciding on tick prevention solutions consider the following:

- *the length of your pet's coat, as long-haired pets are more difficult to check for ticks*
- *whether you can perform an effective tick search on a daily basis*
- *your location, as certain regions have a higher risk of tick populations being present*
- *where you exercise your pet, as bushy areas with long grass carry a higher tick risk*
- *where you holiday.*

Chemical preventative options for dogs include:

- *Seresto tick collar by Bayer replaced every 4 months (lasts twice this long for fleas). You can read more about the Seresto collar [here](#).*
- *Frontline spray applied to your pet every three weeks*
- *Frontline top-spot every two weeks*
- *Advantix top-spot every two weeks (not recommended if your dog co-habits with a cat)*
- *Oral tablets such as Nexgard monthly or Bravecto every 4 months – read more about our position on these preventatives [here](#).*



One benefit of a tick collar is that if your pet has a reaction to the product you can remove it.

Frontline spray has an excellent safety profile - it is registered for use in puppies only a few days old! Unlike any other product. If your dog swims often its effectiveness is reduced.

Frontline top-spots need applying more often. They may be less effective in dogs with dry skin. The top-spot contains more chemicals than the spray to enable its spread through the coat.

Advantix is well tolerated by some pets and not by others. It is toxic to cats and so is not recommended if your pet shares their household with a feline friend.

Many people are leaning towards oral preventatives such as Nexgard and Bravecto. The safety data on these products is less convincing. Side effects can be as diverse as intense itching, diarrhoea or even seizures.

There may also be a cumulative effect from the use of any chemical. You may not see a reaction the first time, but a few months or years later you could.

Tick Prevention Protocol & Natural Solutions

Tick paralysis can be fatal. Symptoms progress rapidly if ticks go undetected.

We recommend finding a chemical preventative option that works for your pet. And consider tick clips in summer + daily tick searches. Avoid areas where there is long grass or wildlife traffic. We also recommend the use of our Tick Drop discussed below.

If you have a pet with compromised health you may want to avoid chemical products.

We can provide natural solutions. Options include:

- *Daily EFFECTIVE tick searches*
- *Keep your dog's coat clipped short during tick season*
- *Daily application of our tick repellent 'Tick Trickster' mist or oil concentrate*
- *Weekly use of 'Ticks Off' coat mist stops ticks from climbing up the fur of your animal and prevents attachment.*
- *Oral administration of the 'Tick Drop' as per label instructions.*



More Info on 'Tick Drop'

Animals used to produce the tick treatment serum are exposed to ticks regularly. They learn to tolerate many ticks like our wildlife do. There is detectable immunity that repels tick attachment and neutralises the tick poison. It is short-lived, lasting 3-6 months according to the University of Queensland's research.

Our 'Tick Drop' works on this same principle, mimicking "tick infestation". Resistance to the toxin develops from exposure to it daily in micro doses. Resistance to the tick toxin builds so that if a tick attaches, signs of paralysis progress much more slowly and are not as severe.



Ticks can still attach, and may stay attached, but paralysis signs are slow to develop. Pets on our 'Tick Drop' are less likely to be severely affected and recover more quickly. One of our patients on the Tick Drop had a tick on her so engorged that it fell off itself (after 10 days or more!). She had only mild weakness and wobbliness in her back legs. She did not develop any respiratory compromise. We highly recommend the 'Tick Drop' for all pets, whether using chemical or natural solutions, year-round!

PESKY FLEAS!

Fleas can be extremely irritating for some pets. Allergic animals may need treating with flea chemical agents. Generally, however, we rely too much on chemical agents when it comes to pest control. Natural control measures can be adequate, and much safer for your family and your pet.



The Flea Life Cycle – some astonishing facts!

An adult female flea can lay up to 5000 eggs in her lifetime! (And we wonder how flea troubles escalate out of control....!)

Flea eggs are laid on your pet, and then drop off into their environment. Most eggs, larvae and pupae are in your pet's bedding or favourite resting spots.

Flea eggs and larvae like dark, cool areas. Carpets, under furnishings, floorboard cracks, underneath the house, and the garage or garden shed are prime real estate.

The flea's whole life-cycle (female flea – egg – larva – pupa – adult flea) can occur in as little as three weeks.

95-99% of the flea population in your home resides OFF your pet. Treating these areas is essential for effective flea management.

Natural Approach to Flea Control in the Home

These measures will help keep your home and pets flea-free. Without overloading either with toxic chemicals.

Steam-clean your carpets and rugs at the beginning of the flea season (late winter or early spring).

Vacuum regularly – at least weekly, daily if possible. Your vacuum is one of your best weapons in the battle against fleas. It sucks up and kills flea eggs, larvae, pupae and adults.

Limit your pet's access to carpets, rugs, the couch and other textiles. Unless you vacuum them daily!

Place rugs, doormats and pet bedding in the sun every few days. The sun dries out flea eggs and larvae.

Invest in bedding that is easier to keep flea-free. A Henry Hottie bed, Houndhouse kennel or the Snooza flea-free raised bed.

Wash bedding covers weekly in hot water (at least 60C) then hang in the hot sun to dry.

Sprinkle our 'Don't Let the Bugs Bite Dust' onto your pet's bedding. It will guard your pet from fleas while they sleep.

Keep outdoor areas swept clean and free of debris.

Keep grass cut short, as flea eggs and larvae don't like heat or sun, and encourage ants to eat the flea larvae.

Block off access to areas underneath your house or deck, the garage or the shed. (Ensure your pet still has somewhere cool and shady to rest in hot weather though!)

Sprinkle food-grade diatomaceous earth around shady areas of the garden. It kills the larvae.

Natural Approach to Flea Control on Your Pet

You don't have to rely on the constant use of toxic chemicals.

1. The Simple Comb

A daily brush followed by a targeted flea combing with a dedicated flea comb does wonders for every pet. It helps you monitor and control flea infestation. It also massages your pet's skin, promoting blood and lymph flow and detoxification.

When using the flea comb, concentrate around the warm and humid spots. The ears, under the neck, in the armpits, and around the tail base, as well as checking the head, belly, flanks and legs. Comb fleas out and squish them against the tines of the comb to kill them as you go. To slow fleas down before combing you can wash your pet first to partly drown the fleas.

2. The Slightly Less Simple Bath

Bath fortnightly, or weekly if dealing with a moderate or severe flea burden. Some cats will tolerate baths quite well. Use a gentle shampoo that will not strip oil from the coat, particularly if bathing more than fortnightly. Come see us for shampoo recommendations, or search our online store! Work the lather well into the skin and leave it on for at least 5 minutes. (This is a good time to give your dog a bone to chew on.) Comb out or drown any critters making their way to dry ground.

3. Rinse

After rinsing out shampoo, follow with a simple homemade flea rinse. A whole lemon sliced and steeped in two cups of boiling water overnight. Strain before using, and either pour over your animal, or spray it on, or dip them in it if they are small. Leave the lemon rinse on the skin – do not wash out. Lemons contain limonene, which is a natural citrus component that kills and deters fleas. Lemon rinses are safe to use on cats.

4. Mist

Between baths, you can use Dr Nat's 'Immune Shield' vinegar mist as a daily mist over a dry coat. Fleas do not like the smell or taste the vinegar or other ingredients like neem. It is an effective flea deterrent when used regularly.

When to Use Flea Chemicals

If your pet is allergic to fleas, or if you are dealing with a large flea burden, chemicals provide a quicker result. There are some pharmaceutical products that are safer than others. The Frontline spray discussed above will provide 6 weeks cover.

Reliance on chemical products long-term does weaken an animal's system.
Use chemicals only when required.

When to Avoid Flea Chemicals

It is important to avoid using toxic flea control chemicals on puppies and kittens. They have not yet developed the appropriate pathways for detoxifying chemicals.

Best to also avoid toxic flea chemicals if your pet is chronically ill, ailing, or has cancer.

YOU HAVE GRADUATED!

And there you have it, a crash course in Holistic Disease Prevention. How easy is that!

There is almost always a solution for every problem, and the team at The Natural Vets is here to support and assist you along the way. We are passionate about proactive pet health care, and a strong nutritional foundation is crucial for that to manifest. If any questions, obstacles or problems arise along the way, please know that our dedicated team is only a phone call away.

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DR RENEE – BIOGRAPHY

Dr Renee is a Holistic Vet based on the Sunshine Coast. She practices from The Natural Vets in Forest Glen, a dedicated holistic veterinary practice, and is one of the founding Veterinarians. She seeks to prevent many common pet health problems by setting pets on The Path to Wellness at any age or stage.



She graduated from the Bachelor of Veterinary Science at the University of Queensland in 2003 with Honours, and then within a year of graduating discovered the limitations of the conventional medical model and standard veterinary training. She went on to study Veterinary Homeopathy and complete a Graduate Diploma in Chinese Veterinary Herbal Medicine.

Dr Renee strives to tread gently on the earth, connected to the land, ocean, trees, and all of Mother Earth's creatures. When not saving animals, she can be found singing, writing songs or dancing, with Shanti the Staffie and her three wild earthlings in tow.

And when the adventures are done for the day, she is blessed to have Sapote the Devon Rex to curl up with on the couch.