



MYSTIC
DOG
MAMA

The Mystic Dog Mama Low-Tox Parasite Prevention Toolkit

Parasites, Prevention & the Power of Informed Choice

Dogs have always lived alongside parasites.

Fleas, ticks, and worms are part of natural ecosystems.

But in recent decades, parasite prevention has shifted from targeted treatment to routine pesticide exposure. Many dogs now receive monthly systemic insecticides, even when their individual risk may be low.

This guide isn't about rejecting medicine, it's about asking better questions so that you can make better-informed decisions.

Because parasite prevention works best when it's thoughtful, layered, and tailored to *your dog's* life.

The Hidden Trade-Off in Modern Parasite Prevention

Most modern flea and tick medications work by circulating pesticide compounds through the dog's bloodstream. They do not repel parasites. Instead, when a parasite bites the dog, it ingests the chemical and dies.

These medications can be effective, but like all pharmaceuticals and chemicals, they come with trade-offs.

Reported side effects can include:

- vomiting or diarrhea
- lethargy
- skin reactions
- neurological symptoms such as tremors or seizures
- behavioural changes

Not every dog experiences visible side effects, but these medications do contribute to a dog's overall chemical load, alongside:

- lawn chemicals
- household cleaners
- processed food additives
- environmental pollutants

In addition to potential impacts on individual dogs, researchers and environmental organisations have raised concerns about pesticide ingredients entering:

- rivers and waterways
- soil systems
- wildlife food chains

None of this means pharmaceuticals should never be used. For some dogs, in some environments, they may be an important part of protection.

But it does highlight why many guardians are exploring more thoughtful and targeted approaches.

A More Thoughtful Approach: Layered Prevention

Parasite prevention shouldn't rely on a single solution. No mode of prevention - chemical or natural - is 100% effective.

That is why many veterinarians and holistic practitioners now recommend a layered approach. My F.E.T.C.H. framework outlines how I do this:

F - Fresh Food for strong internal health

A dog with a fresh, species-appropriate diet and resilient immune system may be less attractive to parasites.

E - Energetics using Traditional Chinese Medicine

Understanding your dog's individual make-up helps you to evaluate which options are best for them.

T- Targeted Approaches

Including targeted pharmaceutical treatments when needed. Others include: regular bathing, potentially using diatomaceous earth when fleas are present

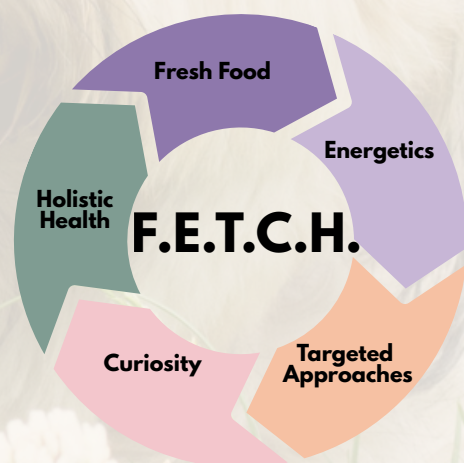
C- Curiosity

Observation and monitoring -simple habits like tick checks dramatically reduce risk.

H- Holistic Health

Managing your dog's environment can greatly improve your chances of reducing parasite exposure. Botanical repellents and plant-based strategies can help discourage parasites.

The key is choosing the right level of intervention for your dog.



"Parasite risk is not the same for every dog — and prevention shouldn't be either."

The Parasite Risk Quiz

How much parasite protection does your dog really need?

To help you better understand your dog's individual risk, and have a productive conversation with your veterinary team, I have created a simple quiz.

But before taking that, here are some things to consider that may be helpful as you evaluate your dog's individual situation:

Fleas

- Having a few fleas is completely normal. The concern is when your dog has a flea infestation or experiences the discomfort of an allergy, or develops tapeworm, which can be easily treated with both pharmaceuticals and natural treatments

Ticks

- In order for disease states to develop, there generally needs to be a co-factor present such as your dog having diabetes or another illness.
- Not all ticks carry disease. There is roughly a 1-2% chance of your dog developing Lyme disease even when exposed to it. And, Lyme disease is treatable. (1)

Intestinal Worms (Helminths)

- Intestinal worms are generally not a health threat unless present in very large numbers (2)

Heartworms (*Dirofilaria immitis*)

- Just because a dog has heartworms does not necessarily mean it will turn into a disease state
- Heartworm transmission is only possible under certain conditions, including a requirement of at least 2 consecutive weeks of temperatures at or above 57 degrees Fahrenheit, 14 degrees Celsius (3)
- Heartworm can be treated

Dis-ease state doesn't result from a lack of treatment. Dis-ease state occurs from an imbalance in the body, an underlying condition, that has allowed parasites to become a burden.

REFERENCES

1. Scott, D. (2023). Lyme Disease in Dogs: What Your Vet Isn't Telling You. [online] Available at: <https://www.dogsnaturallymagazine.com/the-surprising-cause-of-lyme-disease-in-dogs/> [Accessed 25 Feb. 2025].
2. Blue Cross UK (n.d.). Intestinal Worms in Dogs. [online] Blue Cross. Available at: <https://www.bluecross.org.uk/advice/dog/health-and-injuries/intestinal-worms-in-dogs>.
3. Brooks, W. (2024). Heartworm: The Parasite. [online] Veterinary Partner. Available at: <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=19239&id=4951491> [Accessed 25 Feb. 2025].

The Parasite Risk Quiz

How to Use This Assessment:

- Answer each question and mark your response.
- Add up your points and subtract any preventative measure points.
- Use your total score to determine your dog's risk level.



Do you live in an area with parasite concerns (e.g., heartworm, Lyme, tick paralysis)?

Yes +3
No 0



How often does your dog walk in wooded areas?

More than 4x per week +3
1-2x per week +2
A couple of times per month +1
Never 0



Does your garden/backyard share a boundary with woodland?

Yes +3
No 0



How much time does your dog spend in the garden/backyard?

Multiple hours per day +3
A few times per week +2
Rarely +1
Never 0



Does your dog have a long coat?

Yes +3
No 0



Do you have multiple dogs or cats in your household?

Yes +3
No 0



How often does your dog interact closely with other dogs (day care, boarding, play dates, dog parks)?

Daily +3
A few times per week +2
Occasionally +1
Never 0



Does your dog have health concerns requiring medication?

Yes +3
No 0



Does your dog regularly eat other animals' faeces?

Yes +3
No 0



Do you feed ultraprocessed food (kibble, wet food), or an unbalanced rotation of fresh foods?

Yes +3
No 0



Do you regularly check for fleas/ticks after walks?

Yes -2
No 0



Do you regularly clean and maintain your dog's bedding and living areas?

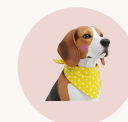
Yes -2
No 0



Is your dog mostly an indoor dog? OR

Do you generally avoid woodland or areas with long grass on walks?

Yes -2
No 0



Do you use dog-safe natural sprays or essential oils on a bandana when your dog is outside?

Yes -2
No 0



Do you keep your grass cut short?

Yes -2
No 0



Do you use nematodes, Diatomaceous Earth, or natural repellent sprays in your garden?

Yes -2
No 0



Do you have insect repelling plants in your garden and near your doors?

Yes -2
No 0



Do you feed a varied, fresh food, species-appropriate diet?

Yes -2
No 0

Calculate your total score & your level of risk:

Scoring and Risk Levels

Total Score: _____

High Risk (18+ points)

Medium Risk (9-17 points)

Low Risk (0-8 points)

The Mystic Dog Mama Low-Tox Parasite Prevention Toolkit

A layered approach to protecting your dog while minimising unnecessary chemical exposure.

Parasites are part of the natural world. The goal isn't to eliminate every risk, but to reduce exposure while supporting your dog's natural resilience.

Small, consistent habits can make a meaningful difference.

1. Strengthen Your Dog From Within (The F.E.T.C.H. principle: Fresh Food)

A healthy skin barrier and balanced microbiome make dogs less attractive hosts for parasites.

Support your dog's internal resilience with:

- a fresh or gently cooked species-appropriate diet whenever possible
- omega-3 fatty acids to support skin health (eggs, small oily fish)
- whole foods rich in zinc and B-vitamins (fresh meat, organ meat, ground pumpkin seeds)
- a diverse, microbiome-supporting diet. Include small amounts of low-starch vegetables for fibre like dark leafy greens, dog-safe fermented foods, and herbs like thyme and oregano (fresh or dried), bone broth
- apple cider vinegar added to your dog's food to balance your dog's pH. Dosage guidance: ¼ tsp for extra-small dogs / ½ tsp for small dogs/ 1 tsp for medium dogs / 2 tsp for large dogs and 1 tablespoon for extra-large dogs
- garlic in small food-based amounts (for dogs that tolerate it, avoid with puppies less than 6 months old, pregnant or lactating bitches, dogs on blood thinners, chemotherapy drugs, and Asian breeds like Shiba Inus and Akitas).

Use fresh, crushed garlic in the following daily dosage:

- ⅙ tsp per 2kg/5lbs body weight
- ⅓ tsp per 5kg/10lbs body weight
- ½ tsp per 7kg/15lbs body weight
- ⅔ tsp per 10kg/20lbs body weight
- 1 tsp per 15kg/30lbs body weight

For dogs over 15kg/30lbs, use no more than 2 tsp daily

Healthy dogs are often better able to coexist with environmental microbes and parasites without becoming unwell.

2. Make Your Garden Unfriendly to Fleas, Ticks, and Mosquitoes *(Environment matters more than most people realise)*

Around 95% of fleas live in the environment, not on the dog.

Simple changes can significantly reduce populations:

- apply beneficial nematodes to lawns and shaded areas - beneficial nematodes naturally prey on flea larvae in soil.
- keep grass trimmed and remove leaf litter
- avoid over-watering lawns and avoid standing water
- encourage natural sunlight in the garden
- you may want to create a garlic spray for your garden, or sprinkle diatomaceous earth
- consider planting naturally insect-repelling plants like lemon balm, sage, rosemary, catnip, lemongrass, basil, and mint by your doors and throughout your garden as their natural oils help repel fleas

3. Use Natural Topical Deterrents *(Layered prevention)*

Some guardians find botanical repellents helpful for discouraging parasites.

Examples include:

- cedarwood or neem-based sprays
- properly diluted essential oil blends like geranium, lemongrass, lavender
- apple cider vinegar coat rinses
- a bandana with 10-20 drops of a dog-safe essential oil
- Amber collars or EM Tick-Off collars for ticks
- Ultrasonic Tick Repeller (worn on the collar)
- Natural Flea & Tick Collar (which resembles a traditional flea/tick collar, but is infused with essential oils rather than pharmaceuticals)
- Natural soaps or shampoos for washing your dog infused with essential oils (such as eucalyptus, peppermint and lemongrass)

It is always advised when using essential oils that you use a high quality oil, and let your dog self-select which ones they like. Never use an undiluted essential oil directly on your dog.

These approaches do not kill parasites but may make the dog a less attractive host.

4. Create Simple Daily Habits *(One of the most effective strategies)*

Many parasites can be prevented through simple observation.

Build these habits into your routine:

- check your dog for ticks after woodland or field walks
- run a flea comb through the coat weekly during warm months
- remove ticks promptly with a proper tick tool
- inspect ears, armpits, and between toes

Early removal dramatically reduces the chance of disease transmission.

5. Manage Your Home Environment *Fleas reproduce rapidly indoors.*

Simple hygiene practices can break their life cycle:

- wash dog bedding regularly
- vacuum carpets and upholstery weekly
- shake out blankets and soft bedding
- keep sleeping areas clean and dry

These steps help prevent small issues from becoming infestations.

If you and your pet's healthcare team decide that pharmaceutical approaches are necessary, you may want to consider including a detox protocol. This may include adding in binders like humic and fulvic acid, chlorella and cilantro (coriander), beets (beetroot), and/or herbs like milk thistle.

You may want to consider a targeted approach to pharmaceuticals. For example, you may just want to give a heartworm pharmaceutical as opposed to an all-in-one heartworm/flea/tick/intestinal parasite pharmaceutical in order to reduce toxin burden.

Rather than a routine, year-round use of pharmaceutical treatments, you may also want to consider only using them during parasite season, or when travelling to a high-risk area.

To better understand your dog's risk of exposure to parasites, as well as to the potential of exposure to disease, you may want to consider a few things:

- Look at updated maps on heartworm prevalence or tick paralysis in your area, or prevalence of other diseases you are concerned about
- Ask your vet about how many actual confirmed cases of a disease there are in your area
- ALWAYS ask to see the data sheet for any medication. Be sure to read what it is meant to do (i.e. "treatment" vs "prevention"), and read about any side effects. Also look at whether or not it is advisable to give a dog with any specific medical conditions. For example, if your dog has experienced seizures, it is best to avoid any pharmaceutical that can cause neurological issues, and it is advised to avoid rosemary in natural repellents. If you have ANY CONCERNS AT ALL, please ask your vet, or tell your vet you would like to think about it, then draft a list of questions that you would like to ask in order to make a decision that you feel comfortable with. You can use the accompanying sheet to write your questions
- Prioritise what kind of prevention you really need. For example, you may want to target treat for only the parasites that are an issue for you, or you may only want to treat seasonally
- What are potential co-factors for disease that your dog might have, such as a pre-existing medical condition, allergies, skin condition, etc?
- Consider visiting the FDA.gov website for information on reported side-effects of the drugs used in the pharmaceutical you are considering (although keep in mind that only a small fraction of cases are reported)
- How can you potentially lower your dog's risk? What factors do you have control over?
- Consider keeping a diary after administering a treatment, to monitor for any side effects? Loss of appetite, GI issues, abnormal drooling, increased scratching or itching, behaviour changes for example

There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to parasite prevention. Choose what feels right for you and your dog.

Join the free Mystic Dog Mama First Light Facebook Group for more guidance, and to learn how to use my F.E.T.C.H. framework to support your dog's health holistically

mysticdogmama.com
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mysticdogmama.com/podcast



<https://facebook.com/groups/fetchfirstlight>

QUESTIONS I WOULD LIKE TO ASK MY VET

Use this sheet to make note of any questions you would like to make sure to ask your vet in order to help you make the decision that feels right for you and your dog.



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Disclaimer: The information included in this guide is for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace the advice of your own veterinarian.

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