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### **CAPC Addresses Reports of Increased Reactions to Topical Flea Products**

BEL AIR, Md. (May 13, 2009) – Recent reports from the EPA indicate an increase in adverse events associated with the use of certain groups of topically applied flea control products commonly known as “spot on” formulations, which are approved for use on dogs and cats.

According to Mike Paul, DVM, executive director of the Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC), the EPA reported a recent dramatic increase to a level of 40,000 adverse events.

“While these figures are concerning, they must be interpreted in light of information that is absent from the report. An adverse event that is reported may be anything from disappointing results, unacceptable odors, or temporary changes to the hair coat, to more significant events such as gastrointestinal upsets, respiratory signs like coughing or sneezing, or skin irritations at the point of application. On rare occasions, serious and life threatening symptoms and even death may occur,” he explains.

While no adverse event is desirable, Dr. Paul says that it’s clear the vast majority of cases are of lesser significance, and the EPA report to date does not clarify the nature or frequency of adverse events.

“The range of products used is amazingly broad,” Dr. Paul adds. “Not only are these products specifically labeled for indication by species, they are also clearly labeled for frequency of application and dosage. There is no reference in the EPA report to adherence to these labeled restrictions.”

In addition, the CAPC notes another variable is the source of these products. It says many products are available over the counter in retail establishments and are sold with no personal directions, restrictions or specific indications other than on the package label. Other products are available from Internet sources with no assurance of purity, safety or efficacy since some are illegally imported or not appropriately manufactured.

Dr. Paul says products dispensed by veterinarians with a client/patient relationship are the most completely supervised with regard to species application, dose and frequency of application, but even these products can be mishandled.

“While 40,000 adverse events is concerning, it is important to consider this number in light of the total doses administered from veterinary sources, internet sources and retail sources, a figure that is simply not available,” Dr. Paul explains. “We do have information on veterinary-dispensed products and even in light of that number, the percentage of adverse events is extremely low and the percentage of major adverse events is miniscule. The incidence of adverse events should always be of concern but must be interpreted in light of the above realities.”

According to the Companion Animal Parasite Council, the improved control of fleas and ticks has done much to improve the comfort level and quality of life of dogs and cats. Further, particularly in view of increased geographic ranges of external parasites and the diseases they carry, flea and tick control have significant implications in protecting human health. Ectoparasites and their control is a genuine zoonotic concern with very real public health implications.

*The Companion Animal Parasite Council([www.capcvet.org](http://www.capcvet.org)) is an independent not-for-profit foundation comprised of parasitologists, veterinarians, medical, public health and other professionals that provide information for the optimal control of internal and external parasites that threaten the health of pets and people. Formed in 2002, the CAPC works to help veterinary professionals and pet owners develop the best practices in parasite management that protect pets from parasitic infections and reduce the risk of zoonotic parasite transmission.*

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