

Safe Prevention of Canine Parasites

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Many products exist for dogs that help prevent parasites such as fleas, ticks, worms and heartworm. Refer to this article written by Anne Jones for more detail on parasites: <http://www.bichonhealth.org/HealthInfo/PreventiveMedications.htm>. Knowing the risks versus the benefits of these preventive medications allows you to be an advocate for your Bichon Frise. Safe alternatives are available to avoid the risk.

As you consider giving one of these medications to your Bichon, know that they are insecticides, a poison, whether given topically on the skin or taken internally as a pill. Also consider that Bichons, like most white-coated breeds, are more sensitive to medications as compared to other breeds, so the risk is higher when giving these dangerous chemicals to your Bichon. The use of preventive medications for fleas, ticks and worms can trigger the onset of any of the numerous autoimmune diseases, seizures, and death. Refer to this article for more detail on the definition of autoimmune diseases: <http://bichonhealth.org/HealthInfo/DefAutoimmune.asp>. Keep in mind that the #1 health issue in Bichons is allergies/skin problems, an autoimmune disease.

Prevention of heartworm from mosquitoes, a serious canine illness, is important for the health of your Bichon. Some breeders use alternatives to prevent mosquito bites and/or give smaller doses to Bichons. For example, the FDA recommends a dose of .5mg/kg of Interceptor (Milbemycin Oxime) per month. For a Bichon weighing 13 pounds, this would equal 3 mg per month. The tablets are available in 2.3 mg for toy breeds and 5.75 mg for breeds 11-25 pounds. Therefore, the correct dose for a Bichon weighing 13 pounds would be about ½ tablet per month of the 5.75 mg tablet, or give one whole tablet every 6 weeks. Read this article written by Nancy McDonald for more detail about heartworm prevention: <http://www.bichonhealth.org/HealthInfo/HeartwormPreventives.htm>

To reduce the risk of adverse reactions, give heartworm preventive medication alone or with preventives for worms only, avoiding the combination medications that contain a flea/tick preventive along with a heartworm preventive. Combining heartworm medication with worm prevention is less risky. The BFCA Health Committee has received numerous reports of reactions to combination preventives for heartworm plus fleas/ticks, and some deaths. Consider that some preventives for fleas/ticks that are applied to the skin direct the owner to wear gloves before applying it to your dog! Read this 2010 warning from the EPA: http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/bd4379a92ceceecac8525735900400c27/76d2b52162bc_eda852576e9005c0d97!OpenDocument

Tick bites can also cause canine health problems, including Lyme Disease. Some medications on the market help prevent flea and tick bites without coverage of heartworm or worms. However, these medications are also insecticides that can be toxic to your Bichon. Instead of giving these poisons to your dog, consider one of the safer options listed below and examine your Bichon for fleas and ticks after outings. Transmission of lyme disease to humans and dogs requires 2-4 days of attachment of the deer tick. Fortunately, ticks are dark in color allowing faster recognition in the white coat of Bichons.

Below is a list of the current preventives for heartworm/worms and fleas/ticks to help you make your decision. The ingredients are in parentheses and are listed in order of quantity, followed the

target pests.

These products fight only worms, including heartworm, so are safer for Bichons:

1. Interceptor (Milbemycin Oxime) (is not currently available in the US): Heartworm, hookworm, roundworm, whipworm
2. Milbemax (Milbemycin Oxime, praziquantel) (is not currently available in the US): Heartworm, hookworm, roundworm, whipworm, flatworm
3. Heartguard Plus or Tri-Heart Plus or Iverheart Plus (Ivermectin, pyrantel pamoate): Heartworm, roundworm, hookworm

These products combine prevention of heartworm with prevention of fleas and ticks, so are risky for Bichons:

1. K9 Advantix II (others not specified, Permethrin, Imidacioprid, Pyriproxyfen): Heartworm, fleas, ticks, lice, biting flies
2. Sentinel (Lifenuon, Milbemycin Oxime): Heartworm, fleas, ticks, hookworm, roundworm, whipworm
3. Revolution (Selamectin): Heartworm, fleas, ticks
4. Trifexis (Spinosad, Milbemycin Oxime): Heartworm, roundworm, hookworm, whipworm, fleas, ticks, lice
5. Capstar (Nitenpyram): Heartworm, fleas, ticks

Instead of giving your Bichon the risky chemicals/insecticides, there are other options to safely prevent bites from fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes:

1. Brewers yeast with garlic tablets 2-3 per day, can be purchased from most pet stores or catalogues.
2. Purification essential oil: Add 25-30 drops to a 10-15 oz. glass spray bottle filled with water. It must be glass because the oils dissolve plastic. Shake bottle before using. Spray the dog before going for walks and work into the coat, concentrating on legs, belly, and ears. The purification oil is safe for dogs—this is a therapeutic grade A oil that can be taken internally by both animals and humans.
<http://humanimal.com/essentialoils.html>
3. Rub 2 drops of lavender oil in your hands and rub into skin starting with tail, can be purchased at whole food stores and health stores
4. If you see fleas, use Dr. Bonner's lavender castile shampoo, leaving on at least 7 minutes
<http://www.drbronner.com/DBMS/LAV.htm>
5. RediCare healing spray and insect repellent <http://www.bichonbash.com/hvests2006.htm>
6. Espana Silk All Natural Bug Spray
<http://www.espanaproducts.com/itemdetail.php?sku=ESP2200DC&=>
7. If you see fleas, shampoo with Espana Silk All Natural Protein Antiseptic/Healing Shampoo <http://www.espanaproducts.com/itemdetail.php?sku=ESP0110DC&=>
8. Herbal flea powders
9. Cedar oil spray

Why risk serious adverse reactions to pest control medications when Bichons are primarily **housedogs**? A good question to ask yourself and your veterinarian as you advocate for your Bichon Frise.....