

RUMA CA&E parasiticides position statement

Pets play a big role in human life; the UK is noted for its love of animals and the companionship and emotional support they provide. Both owners and vets have a duty of care to protect their wellbeing. The provision of medications to both prevent and treat parasites such as worms, ticks and fleas, forms a vital part of protecting pet health and wellbeing – not only to safeguard against the adverse effects of fleas, ticks and worms (e.g. skin conditions from fleas is still one of the top welfare issues attended to in general practice and by charities), but also to protect humans from the threat of zoonotic diseases from these parasites, some of which can severely impact human wellbeing.

The administration of any medicine, in either animals or humans, results in an environmental footprint through excretion from the human/animal body or inappropriate disposal of products. In the case of some flea treatments, owners may unintentionally wash these off by bathing their pet or letting them swim in waterways too soon after application, or by handwashing or laundering pet bedding that might have residues of the treatments on – all of which current evidence suggests can lead to contamination of waterways and the wider environment.

RUMA CA&E's vision recognises there is always a balance to be struck between protecting human, animal and environmental health when it comes to any medicines use. This is why across all medical professions (human and animal) there is an ongoing focus on medicines stewardship and in the veterinary profession, an increased focus on the responsible use of parasiticides.

There are, however, many knowledge gaps. There is a need for better evidence and insight about the best way to use parasite medicines to protect our pets and ourselves, the impact use may have on the environment, and the most appropriate interventions that may be required to maximise benefit and minimise risk.

RUMA CA&E recently chaired a series of meetings focusing on 'Medicines Stewardship Beyond Antibiotics', which brought together regulators and academics, as well as many other stakeholders from across the profession, to discuss the One Health aspects of ecto and endo-parasiticide use. The group agreed that whilst some existing evidence suggests that the use of these medicines on pets can be a source of environmental contamination, there are gaps in the available information regarding environmental impacts and there is a need for more research to help support the development of evidence-based guidance for the profession and owners. This group agreed that responsible prescribing, supply, application and disposal of these treatments should be strongly encouraged. Simultaneously, there is a need for the evidence base to be built up to support the best ways to use these products and the regulatory aspects clarified.

RUMA CA&E's understanding and position will develop further as the evidence base grows.

Our current view

- RUMA CA&E acknowledges that flea, tick and worm treatments are valuable medicines that help prevent and treat parasites in animals and humans, and therefore play an important role in preventive health planning
- We believe that vets should take a risk based, proportionate and targeted approach to the use of these medicines, which takes into account seasonal fluctuations in parasite prevalence (temperatures lower = lower ticks for example), the lifestyle of the animal e.g. house cats may need less flea and worm treatments than outdoor cats, and geographical risk factors
- The key is to use what is necessary to manage the parasite risks, and not too much
- We also advocate for the importance of good advice being given at the point of supply to owners about correct use and disposal of unused products and the packaging in which they are supplied; this helps ensure the effectiveness of the treatments and minimises any environmental impacts

RUMA CA&E promotes the importance of a One Health approach, and we will continue to work with the profession and wider groups of stakeholders to ensure that medicines stewardship takes into account all aspects of the One Health sphere recognising that the health of humans, animals and ecosystems are interconnected.

In summary

By utilising the principles and approaches outlined above, and a contextualised care approach, RUMA CA&E believes the profession should continue to make use of effective parasiticide products to protect the welfare of pet patients, taking into account the means and needs of their owners. These products are effective, and the profession has a duty to support owners to use them in the most responsible way in order to maximise the potential benefits for their pet, whilst at the same time minimising other potential impacts e.g. on the environment.

For more information and resources related to the appropriate use of parasiticides including industry guides and protocols as well as links to research and academic paper resources click here: [Parasiticides – RUMA CA&E](#)