



Crow River
Animal Hospital
& Dental Clinic

Friday Fun Facts – Number 13:2010

Melissa Shelton DVM – Natural Flea and Tick Repellants

Disclaimer: All of the information provided here is intended for educational purposes. The information is not intended to diagnose, treat, or prescribe for any illness. Please seek the advice of a qualified health care professional in your area of concern if you or your pets have a health challenge.

I am asked this question all the time. “Do I have to use flea and tick prevention?” My answer is YES! However, more and more people do not want to use traditional veterinary products like Advantix, Revolution, or Frontline. Here is my honest answer for all of you.

It is more important that we keep fleas and ticks off of your pets with a safe and effective product, than the method that we use to do it. Let me explain. Ticks can transmit serious diseases, not only to your dogs and cats, but to you as a human. Your dog or cat can also bring ticks into your home to infect you. The scary thing to realize is that while we used to say that a tick had to be attached for 24 hours to transmit Lyme and other diseases, this is no longer 100% true. If a tick has started a blood meal on your dog, then drops off in your house – the blood meal has stimulated the replication of the agents that cause Lyme, Ehrlichia, or Anaplasma. That tick is now primed and ready to transmit the disease, and guess what? It is in your bed. So now, a tick that can transmit a potentially fatal disease to a human – is in bed with you – and can transmit the disease in only hours. Scary thought isn't it.

Dogs are often less seriously affected by Lyme Disease than humans. We generally see symptoms of lameness or fever, which usually respond quickly to traditional therapies. Not so for humans. Lyme Disease can be a devastating disease.

This being said, it is VERY important to use the correct types of prevention. For traditional “chemical” veterinary products for fleas and ticks – I will only use Frontline products. I am okay with the Frontline Plus product, however the Frontline Topspot has less chemicals for those who are concerned. To me, Frontline is the safest chemical product on the market. I have personally used Frontline in my own dogs for about 15 years. My oldest dog, Q lived to the ripe old age of 15 ½ years. She had blood panels and a urinalysis every year of her younger life, and almost every 6 months of her senior life. She always had wonderful health, and no abnormalities on her lab work. She had Frontline applied monthly to her, all year round, for the majority of her life. To me, this is a testimony to the overall safety of this product. All of my many dogs (over 8 of

them), have had Frontline applied monthly for a very long time. Every single one of them have blood and urine tests run at least yearly, with no evidence of alterations. However, I ALWAYS support and cleanse their systems with a good diet, anti-oxidants, essential oils, and high quality supplements to allow their body to deal with these “foreign chemicals”.

Many of the “other” chemical products out there – I wouldn’t touch with a 10 foot pole. Advantix is toxic to cats, and shouldn’t be used in households where dogs and cats come into contact. Advantix will also kill fish in bodies of water. We knew someone whose dog swam in a very expensive Koi pond with Advantix applied, and killed every single fish in the pond. Revolution is good for some things; however I have still known dogs that have gotten heartworm while using Revolution for heartworm prevention. Also, Revolution is not very effective for ticks. Over-the-counter products are even worse. I have seen cats seizure, and even die, from Hartz products sold specifically for cats. Biospot is certainly cheap, but if it doesn’t work, how much did it save you? Over-the-Counter products are the main reason why chemical flea and tick preventives, carry such fear. Reactions and poor effectiveness are rampant in OTC preparations.

When people ask me about eliminating the use of Frontline; there usually about 20 other areas of toxic exposure that I would prefer to clean up for the pet, before taking away Frontline. Choosing a high quality food, getting rid of toxic laundry soap and fabric softeners, getting rid of air fresheners, Glade Plug-Ins, and Febreze, choosing non-toxic cleaning supplies, decreasing vaccinations, not exposing pets to lawn chemicals and fertilizers, not exposing pets to de-icing chemicals from roads, tires, and sidewalks, not giving synthetic vitamins and supplements, offering clean and healthy water, not exposing them to human perfumes... the list goes on and on. If you are already an “ultra clean” pet owner, and now want to go the extra mile and eliminate your Frontline too – okay. But if you are still feeding Purina or Kibbles ‘n’ Bits – don’t even complain to me that Frontline is “toxic”.

However, as we are getting into an age of wanting to use less and less man made chemicals – I am exploring the options that natural remedies, and especially essential oils, have to offer in this area. So let’s talk about what everyone is hoping to hear; Non-traditional and alternative prevention of Fleas and Ticks.

I am going to conduct a “little experiment” on my 5 dogs and many cats this summer. We live in a heavily infested tick area, right on the river. 15 acres of trees, tall grasses, ticks and mosquitoes. We have the prime testing grounds for a head to head test of natural vs. chemical. I must say, the chemical products are more convenient, and need to be applied less often. However, I too, do not want to use chemical sprays and preventions on my human children, much less my four-legged kids. So I must move out of my “realm of traditional training” and figure out what works the best!

The other important thing that I will tell you – is BEWARE of “natural” products. I am routinely asked to evaluate this product or that product. One thing I find consistently – is that everyone is riding the natural and organic craze!! I have even seen one “natural” product that contained Sodium Lauryl Sulfate in it. Come on, give me a break!! I’d rather have the Frontline!

Let’s have some fun and I’ll help you evaluate some natural products:

Here are some blurbs from an “all natural” flea and tick spray containing Cedarwood and Peppermint Essential Oils: My comments regarding them in green...

I decided to formulate my own (*honestly natural*) natural flea control and tick remedy. And I decided to use 100% pure **botanical** active ingredients **So only the ACTIVE ingredients are 100% pure botanical?? What about the inactive ingredients?**

And when **both** of my active ingredients received the coveted “Minimum Risk” designation by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for **approved** bio-pesticides - posing "insignificant risk" to human and animal health, and to the environment - I knew I was *really* on to an *honest-to-goodness natural* flea control & tick remedy! **Again, what about the INACTIVE ingredients, apparently these are not a concern to this “inventor”.**

While my formula is a proprietary trade secret, I *can* tell you that my forehead slapping realization came when I combined Cedar Oil and Peppermint Oil. This was the miracle breakthrough in natural flea control I was searching for. **I don’t like trade secrets. And why would I pay \$40 for his probably poor grade, potentially harmful Cedar Oil and Peppermint Oil spray, when I could make my own with medical grade oils for pennies, with no additives??**

And that's all there is to it. Just cedar wood oil, peppermint oil, [ethyl lactate](#) (a natural emulsifier) and filtered water. Period. That's it. Nothing more. **That’s ONE BIG NOTHING MORE! Ethyl Lactate – here is what Wikipedia says about Ethyl Lactate. Do you really want to use this?**

Ethyl lactate, also known as lactic acid ethyl ester, is a monobasic [ester](#) formed from [lactic acid](#) and [ethanol](#), commonly used as a [solvent](#). This compound is considered [biodegradable](#) and can be used as a water-rinsible degreaser. Ethyl lactate is found naturally in small quantities in a wide variety of foods including [wine](#), [chicken](#), and various [fruits](#). The odor of ethyl lactate when dilute is mild, [buttery](#), [creamy](#), with hints of fruit and [coconut](#).

Ethyl lactate is produced from biological sources, and can be either the levo (*S*) form or dextro (*R*) form, depending on the organism that is the source of the [lactic acid](#). Most biologically sourced ethyl lactate is ethyl (-)-L-lactate. Ethyl lactate is also produced

industrially from petrochemical stocks, and this ethyl lactate consists of the racemic mixture of levo and dextro forms. In some jurisdictions, the *natural* product is exempt from many restrictions placed upon use and disposal of solvents. Because both enantiomers are found in nature, and because ethyl lactate is easily biodegradable, it is considered to be a *green* solvent.

Due to its relatively low toxicity, ethyl lactate is used commonly in pharmaceutical preparations, [food additives](#),^[1] and [fragrances](#). Ethyl lactate is also used as solvent for [nitrocellulose](#), [cellulose acetate](#), and cellulose [ethers](#).^[2]

Ethyl lactate [hydrolyzes](#) in the presence of [water](#) and [acids](#) or [bases](#) into [lactic acid](#) and [ethanol](#).

Ethyl Lactate can be used as a cosolvent to produce suitable conditions for the formation of aryl aldimines.^[3]

Everyone should go to this site and read about how “wonderful” this natural product is! Especially read the reviews. I can guarantee you that the essential oils used within it were NOT medical grade. This product is horrendous, and I feel so sorry for the pets and owners who were suckered into using this product. They would have been better off with Frontline. Even the company gives directions for how to wash off the product, when you see a reaction! However, they give the wrong recommendation of washing off the product with soap and water – which as I have hopefully taught you – spreads the essential oils, making the reaction worse, as water and oils do not mix. There are so many flaws to this product – I just can’t even comment on them all.

<http://www.onlynaturalpet.com/products/Sentry-Natural-Defense-Flea-Tick-Squeeze-On-for-Dogs/207000.aspx>

Okay, enough fun that way! Well, since I haven’t conducted my own doggy experiment yet – I will leave you with testimonials, directly from others who have used medical grade Young Living Essential Oils to create their own flea and tick preventions. I will be creating various sprays and trying different applications this summer on my dogs – and will keep you updated on how we are doing. But, if they are covered in ticks – it’s back to Frontline for me!!!

Note: Be aware that some recipes are specific for dogs – you should contact your veterinary aromatherapist if you have any questions!! I do not endorse any of these treatments, they are strictly for educational purposes. Please use common sense. If you are not experienced at using essential oils for yourself or your pet – please ask questions or come to a class to learn more!

Hi Everyone (Flea Collars)

I’ve been working on a natural flea collar that would not irritate the skin, smells great and is natural. I am happy to announce that I have finally found a wonderful combination and I want to share it with you. This is good for ANY animal. Feel free to

share it with your friends, I just ask that you give credit where credit is due. The oils are only from Young Living, of course.

Take a soft collar of any kind or brand, even the one that is already on your pet will do great. ½ teaspoon alcohol, 1 drop Cedarwood Oil, 3 drops Purification Oil, 2 drops Lavender Oil, 1 drop Citronella Oil, 1 drop Thyme Oil and 3 drops Orange Oil. Mix the ingredients in a stainless steel bowl and soak the soft collar in it until all the liquid is absorbed. Allow the collar to dry completely prior to putting it on your pet.

This collar should last up to 1 month, but if it does begin to lose its potency, simply remake the above mixture and soak it again. You can add garlic oil if you so desire as fleas and mosquitoes HATE garlic. I don't use it because YL does not have garlic oil yet, so I will wait until they come out with it to add it to my flea collar. I hope you all enjoy this recipe. Purrs -n- blessings, Leigh Foster

Hi – This recipe is from when I had my grooming and boarding business and would occasionally have animals come in with fleas, etc. I would also use this on the horses during fly season. For a spray, 10 drops each of Citronella (from Creer Labs), Purification, Eucalyptus and Peppermint in a 24 ounce bottle and fill with water. It really does work great! Sincerely, Sara Kenney

For ticks - rub Purification and/or Lavender between shoulders of your pet, on belly and legs 3 times a day for a week then once a day. Put Purification directly on embedded ticks to remove and apply more Purification to heal the wound.

Carole – I use Purification Oil on my children and myself every day in the summer to ward off deer ticks. I have had fantastic results. When I don't use the oil, I find ticks. When I use it, no ticks. Our area is infested. When I did find a tick like when I missed applying the oil, I applied Thyme, which makes the tick release completely so you don't leave a body part in when you pull it out and then Purification on the bite site. I don't know if Purification would make any difference in the animals because of the Citronella Oil in it, but it might be worth a try. Hope this helps! Lee Anne

Fleas and Ticks - Lemongrass is an alternative to Citronella and is extremely effective at repelling all kinds of insects. Grapefruit repels insects especially fleas. Lemon is a great flea repellent and it smells clean and refreshing. Peppermint is wonderful at repelling flies, fleas, mosquitoes and ants.

Alternating Lavender and Melrose between your dog or cat's shoulder blades, the same way they recommend on the boxes of those horrible flea and tick medicines a few days before flea and tick season starts and going into flea and tick season helps your pet repel these horrible parasites. You can also just use Purification instead of alternating Lavender and Melrose.

I have found that R.C. is an excellent topical repellent for both fleas and ticks. You place one drop in an ounce of water, shake and spray on the coat once or twice per day as needed. Do not use anything that says do not get on your skin or wear gloves!

(Fleas and ticks) I make a spray for my dogs that I apply all over them every day. I put it in a dark spray bottle with essential waters and these oils are good: Purification, Peppermint, Lavender, Eucalyptus, Melaleuca, Citronella, Idaho Tansy, Rosemary,

Lemongrass, Pine, Sage, Cedarwood and/or Orange. Give it a try - works great!
Heather

Fleas, Ticks, Mosquitoes and Flies Herbal Remedy

Ingredients are full strength oils: Melaleuca, Rosemary, Sage, Cedarwood, Peppermint, Sweet Orange, Eucalyptus, Citronella and Pine Needle Oil.

Mix 4-6 drops of each with 32 ounces of any natural shampoo and now you have a natural flea shampoo.

Or mix 2-3 drops each with 16 ounces water in a spray bottle. Shake before each application and spray light over entire body.

Repels fleas, ticks, mosquitoes, flies and also makes the van/car smell great. Spray dogs and blankets. Use before going into the show ring instead of those other sprays. No chemical smell spray. Stuff smells great. Dogs look great and it gives an additional shine to their coat.

This recipe is the courtesy of Diane Makinney of Mid Florida Golden Retriever Rescue.

Annette – Mix about 10 drops of Purification, Eucalyptus and Cedarwood in a spray bottle with some filtered water. Add to that either massage oil or the Sunsation oil (it too wards off bugs). Use a 4 ounce bottle or smaller. Put water and the lipid oil in first only about half full, you'll have to play with it a little, add your essential oils last because if you get carried away putting in the water all your oils will float right out of your bottle, since they go to the top. I use a spray bottle for this but tell people to spray their hands and rub on that way you haven't lost your oils to the wind. This also works for the dogs as a flea and tick repellent. I used this in the south where the ticks were awful and we didn't get any, we forgot to put it on we each had two ticks we brought home with us. Charla

We use a mixture of equal parts of Lemongrass, Cedarwood and Purification and put in a bottle, then drop 2-3 drops maybe once a week, maybe less in between their shoulder blades and that is it. We are in the country with horses, turkeys etc, next to woods and grasslands where they are prevalent and we have no problem with fleas or ticks. Jeanette

For Kitty Lovers

The first thing I do with fleas is bathe my cats with Animal Scents Shampoo mixed with some extra oils (usually Cedarwood, Lavender and some Lemongrass). Then I flea comb them. When they are dry, I rub them down with some oils. The annoying thing is that the oils that are best for fleas are also hot oils and can hurt the cats. I have burned my cat with Lemongrass. So I go more for rubbing down the fur to repel the fleas. It works!

Good luck! Namaste, Rachel

The oil I use the most on Grace is Purification. She gets 2 drops every week or two (one on the neck and one on the base of her tail) to keep the fleas off. In the summer to keep bugs off, I use a mixture of 1 ounce Witch Hazel mixed with 30 drops of Cedarwood. Works like a charm and I also use it on myself. Rich

We mixed Peppermint Oil with our rug shampoo to destroy a flea infestation. First, we tried the store brand flea bomb, but it did not work. So we shampooed the rug using 15-20 drops in a gallon of shampoo mix, two weeks in a row. It worked great and now we no longer have fleas!

Ron

My aunt and I use Purification to keep the fleas off our dogs. I've been using it for about 9 months, and she's been using it for several years on all of hers. We apply 2 drops, either weekly or bi-weekly: 1 goes at the base of the tail, and the other goes between the shoulders, at the base of the neck. Then just rub it in.

Additionally, to help keep mosquitoes and other pests away (both on the dogs and ourselves), we use a mixture of 1 ounce Witch Hazel, available at any drug store and 30 drops of the Cedarwood. We just spray it on the dogs and ourselves when outside. I hope this helps some. God Bless! Rich

I use Purification on my dogs and cat and it keeps them tick and flea proof. I rub it into their coats twice a month for indoor dogs and weekly for outdoor dogs. I have an American Eskimo and a Flatcoated Retriever-Newfoundland mix. These dogs have a serious undercoat. But a little goes a long way. I add a couple of drops of JuvaCleanse for parasites to their water dishes and I'm set for the day. Nina

YL has Wild Tansy water that works very well to keep flies, mosquitoes and other bugs away. Or you can make your own "brew". 60 drops of either Eucalyptus or Cedarwood (I prefer the Cedarwood) mixed with 2 ounces of witch hazel. Spray on the dog once or twice a week. For the ticks and fleas, I use Purification - one drop at the base of the neck between the shoulders and one above the base of the tail. In the video they say to put it under the tail, but I haven't quite figured out how to turn a 75 pound collie upside down - just kidding! Anyway, I also use the Purification once or twice a week. I've done this for the past two years and they've done very, very well. In fact, I even use the Cedarwood spray mix or the Tansy on myself when I cut the grass. It keeps the bugs away

Hi Silvia – Here is what I use for fleas and ticks - Orange, Purification, Peppermint, Eucalyptus in a dark spray bottle with purified water. It depends on the size of the bottle how many drops you use. I use a small bottle and about 15 drops of each. I like a small bottle because I like to make it up fresh every couple days. I also like to add Lemongrass. There is no set rule for any of this so play with the oils and see what works best for you. Connie

Did you know that 1 tablespoon of white vinegar to a pint of distilled water then take a wash cloth dipped in the solution and then rung out and wiped over your dogs and cats will also rid them of fleas? One dip and wring of the washcloth per animal. You can also make a spray out of the same solution and spray your yard and home to rid your area of fleas as well. Leigh Foster

Hi Lew – On another list I found a recipe for flea/tick repellent.(7-9 drops of the following essential oils mixed into 24 ounce spray bottle of water, Cedarwood, Melaleuca, Rosemary, Peppermint, Sage, Eucalyptus, Orange, Citronella and Pine Needle (Juniper). I have opted to discontinue heartworm preventative and heartworm test 2 times a year instead, and discontinued Frontline Plus (for ticks/fleas). I use this spray. I understand ticks are tough. I know 2 people personally that used Frontline Plus and still got ticks. Thank you, Laura

Hi Ginger (cat with fleas) – On the scabs I would use Lavender Oil to help the skin cells rejuvenate themselves. For the fleas, I make a blend out of Orange Oil, Purification, Lemongrass, and Eucalyptus diluted with V6 Oil and applied to the cats daily right down the spine, like a Raindrop and I tip their ears with it. Leigh

Pat – Geranium Oil is our oil of choice for tick repellent. They seem to hate the smell. I use it all spring and summer on us and our Golden Retrievers. Valerie

Amy – I've been putting a couple of drops of Australian Blue on the dogs, between shoulders and near the base of the tail. We have had very few fleas since I started doing that. I only do it a couple of times a week, although probably could/should do it more often. The dogs spend several hours a day outside on 3 acres with poultry and other livestock. Best wishes, Carol

Dillon – Since I have a kennel and dogs come and go, many have come with fleas. I have not had a problem with them staying since I use Purification in a spray bottle and spray the house (and dogs) regularly. I use the 20/22 ounce bottles and depending upon if there are fleas present or just as a maintenance, determines how many drops. I average about 10 drops but will get a bit heavy handed (up to 20 drops) if fleas are present just because I simply hate the little critters. I put a drop or two of Lemongrass on their necks or backs and I use the PetScents Shampoo exclusively. Nope! No fleas want to live here. Kimber

When bugs are out, I make up a spray of 10 drops each of Lavender, Lemongrass and Peppermint in about an ounce of Neem oil. Add a few drops of Animal Scents Shampoo and fill the 4 ounce bottle with pure water. I spray my dog and myself and the critters don't bother us. As an added benefit, I believe my skin felt and looked softer. Laurie

Pat – I use a mixture of Peppermint, Purification, Lemon, Lavender, and Thieves in V6 Oil mixed half and half with water and put it in a spray bottle. Then I spray it around my shoes and ankles and sort of just "spritz" the rest of me. I don't have any kind of bug problems when I use this! Margaret

My father's cat had kittens and somehow they got fleas. My father did not want to use anything on them since they are less than three weeks old but needed to rid them of the fleas. I had heard that Lavender works on fleas. As soon as I put drops of Lavender Oil on them, the fleas literally jumped off the kittens' bellies! I put a drop behind each ear, on the back near the tail and on the underside of the belly. I checked them about an hour later and the fleas had disappeared.

Hi – Have you done the Animal Scents Shampoo and oils? Depending on the size of the dog and amount of the shampoo to be used, add 10 drops of Eucalyptus Oil and I've used any that I have on hand, about 5 drops of Peppermint, 5 drops Thieves (which I have found kills even ticks nicely by itself). And you need Citronella Oil which we use to be able to purchase from Creer Labs. I haven't had to in awhile so hope it is still available. About 15 drops of that, bathe the dog with this, massage in all over nice and deep let it stay on the dog for 10 - 15 minutes with intermittent massaging again. I was a dog groomer for years and this worked well for me. The biggest trick is to let it stay on the dog for a good length of time so the oils have time to work on the pests. Sincerely, Sara

Whew! That is a lot of information isn't it! And that wasn't all I found. But those testimonials certainly contain the information that I will use while formulating my own concoctions to try out.

Here is a recipe created by Ed Geiger that worked well for my family last year. I will try this out in the dogs and horses as well. I have been told to saturate the dog's fur daily and rub in well for 3-5 days. Then re-apply every 3 days or so – sometimes farther apart, depending on your need.

Natural Spray –

- 1 gallon distilled water, 1 ounce Organic Catnip made into a tea, strained, and let cool
- 40 drops Purification
- 40 drops Idaho Tansy
- 40 drops DiGize
- 20 drops Rosemary
- 8 drops Peppermint

Happy flea and tick repelling! And please, let me know your honest results as well. If you still see fleas and ticks; or if you don't – I want to know about it. Also, please continue to test your dogs with a heartworm test that screens for exposure to tick borne disease. This is an easy way to monitor if they have been bitten by a tick that is carrying a disease. This test is often referred to as the Idexx 4Dx Snap Test. If your dog is positive for exposure to a tick borne illness – not only is your tick control not adequate – but you and your family are also at risk for exposure to disease carrying ticks!

“Nature gave us the gift of healing. Providing our bodies the nutrients and care required to heal, lies in our own actions.”

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