



Overview

Fleas and ticks are not just a nuisance — they are vectors for serious diseases and can cause significant medical problems in their own right. A single flea can cause anemia in a kitten. A tick bite can transmit Lyme disease. In NYC, both parasites are year-round concerns: fleas thrive indoors in heated apartments, and tick populations in parks like Central Park, Prospect Park, and Staten Island Greenbelt have expanded significantly in recent years.

■ ■ **Year-round prevention is essential in NYC.** Ticks are active whenever temperatures are above 35°F — which in NYC means most of the year. Fleas survive indoors all winter in heated apartments. Climate change is making this worse: shorter, warmer winters and fluctuating temperatures are allowing tick colonies to survive longer into fall and re-emerge earlier in spring. Tick seasons that once ran April–November now frequently extend through December and restart in February. Do not let your guard down in the "off-season" — there is no off-season anymore.

■ **Exotic Pets & Ectoparasites:** Fleas, ticks, and mites can also affect exotic animals — rabbits, guinea pigs, ferrets, birds, and reptiles are all susceptible to their own species-specific external parasites. Many over-the-counter dog and cat products are toxic to exotic species. **Never use a flea or tick product on an exotic pet without consulting a veterinarian first.** Reach out to XVCare if you have questions about ectoparasite prevention or treatment for your exotic companion — safe and effective options do exist but must be species-appropriate.

Diseases Transmitted

Disease	Vector	Species Affected	Signs / Notes
Lyme Disease	Deer tick (Ixodes scapularis)	Dogs (& humans)	Fever, joint pain, kidney disease (Lyme nephritis). NYC parks are endemic.
Anaplasmosis	Deer tick	Dogs (& humans)	Fever, lethargy, low platelet count, joint pain.
Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever	American dog tick	Dogs (& humans)	Rapid-onset fever, vasculitis, can be fatal if untreated.
Ehrlichiosis	Lone Star tick / Brown dog tick	Dogs	Fever, low blood counts, weight loss, bleeding disorders.
Bartonellosis (Cat Scratch Fever)	Fleas / ticks	Cats (can transmit to humans)	In cats: often subclinical. In humans: fever, swollen lymph nodes.
Tapeworms (Dipylidium)	Fleas (ingested)	Dogs & cats	GI parasites — pets infected by grooming and swallowing fleas.
Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD)	Flea saliva (allergic reaction)	Dogs & cats	Intense itching, hair loss, skin lesions. A single flea bite triggers a reaction in allergic animals.



Exotic Pet Ectoparasite Diseases

Disease / Parasite	Vector	Species	Signs / Notes
Cheyletiellosis ("Walking Dandruff")	Cheyletiella mites	Rabbits, guinea pigs, cats	Intense scaling, flaking skin; mites are visible as moving dandruff. Zoonotic — can cause itchy skin lesions in humans.
Sarcoptic Mange	Sarcoptes scabiei mites	Ferrets, rabbits (& humans)	Severe itching, hair loss, crusty skin. Highly contagious and zoonotic.
Fur Mites (Myocoptes)	Myocoptes musculus	Guinea pigs, mice	Hair loss, dandruff, scratching. Often subclinical but can worsen in immunocompromised animals.
Avian Dermanyssus (Red Mite)	Dermanyssus gallinae	Birds (poultry & pet birds)	Nocturnal blood-feeding; anemia, feather loss, restlessness. Can bite humans.
Tick Infestation	Various tick species	Rabbits, tortoises, hedgehogs	Blood loss, tick paralysis risk. Species-appropriate tick removal required.
Flea Infestation	Ctenocephalides spp.	Ferrets, rabbits	Anemia in small animals; flea allergy dermatitis; potential Bartonella exposure.

Prevention Products — Dogs & Cats

Product	Species	Schedule	Coverage
Simparica Trio	Dogs	Monthly oral	Fleas + ticks + heartworm + intestinal parasites
Nexgard (afoxolaner)	Dogs	Monthly oral	Fleas + 5 tick species
Bravecto (fluralaner)	Dogs & Cats	12-week oral (dogs) / 8–12 wk topical (cats)	Long-lasting flea + tick protection
Credelio (lotilaner)	Dogs & Cats	Monthly oral	Fast-acting flea + tick kill within hours
Revolution Plus (selamectin + sarolaner)	Cats	Monthly topical	Fleas + ticks + heartworm + ear mites + roundworms
Advantage II (imidacloprid)	Dogs & Cats	Monthly topical	Flea-only; no tick coverage
Seresto Collar	Dogs & Cats	8-month collar	Continuous flea + tick protection; convenient for resistant pets



■ Prevention Products — Exotic Pets

Product	Species	Schedule	Notes
Revolution (selamectin)	Ferrets	Monthly topical	Fleas + ear mites + heartworm; commonly used in ferrets off-label
Advantage (imidacloprid) II	Rabbits	Monthly topical (kitten dose)	Flea control in rabbits; dose per vet guidance — do NOT use dog formulation
Ivermectin (injectable/topical)	Rabbits, guinea pigs, birds	Per vet prescription	Mites, fur mites, sarcoptic mange — must be dosed by vet
Pyrethrin-based sprays (low %)	Birds (some species)	Per vet guidance	Certain bird-safe formulations for mites; many pyrethrins are TOXIC to birds — vet required
Fipronil (Frontline)	AVOID in rabbits & exotics	—	■ Toxic to rabbits; not safe for most exotic species — consult vet before use
Environmental treatment (IGR)	All exotic owners	As needed	Premise sprays with insect growth regulators for flea-infested environments; keep pets off treated areas until dry

■ Critical Safety Warning

■ **NEVER use permethrin-containing dog flea products on cats.** Permethrin is in many spot-on flea products labeled for dogs (including Advantix, some generic brands). It is highly toxic to cats and causes seizures, tremors, hyperthermia, and death. Even contact with a recently treated dog can poison a cat. Always read labels carefully.

■ **Topicals Toxic to Exotic Pets:** Many flea and tick products safe for dogs and cats are dangerous — sometimes lethal — to exotic species. Key hazards: **Fipronil (Frontline)** is toxic to rabbits. **Permethrin** is toxic to birds and reptiles. **Pyrethrin sprays** in high concentrations are toxic to birds and cats. **Tea tree oil-based products** are toxic to cats, small mammals, and birds. **Essential oil flea sprays** marketed as "natural" are often not safe for exotics. **Always consult a veterinarian before applying any product to an exotic pet** — including products labeled "safe for small animals."

■ Treating an Active Flea Infestation

Only 5% of a flea population lives on the pet — 95% is in the environment (eggs, larvae, pupae in carpets, furniture, and bedding). Eliminating fleas requires treating ALL pets in the home simultaneously and treating the environment:

- Treat all pets with a veterinary-recommended product on the same day
- Vacuum all carpets, furniture, and cracks daily for 2–3 weeks — dispose of bag immediately
- Wash all pet bedding in hot water weekly
- Use an environmental premise spray or fogger containing an insect growth regulator (IGR)
- Expect a 3–4 week period to break the flea life cycle completely



■ **Treating an active flea infestation is a process — not a one-day fix.** It takes weeks of consistent effort across every pet in the home and every surface they touch. It can feel overwhelming, especially in apartments where re-exposure is constant. This is normal. Be patient with yourself and your pets — and know that with the right protocol, it does resolve. XVCare is here to help you through it if you have questions along the way.

■ Ticks — What You Need to Know

Ticks are more than a nuisance — in NYC and the surrounding region, they are active vectors for multiple serious diseases. Deer ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*) are endemic in every NYC borough park, Westchester, Long Island, and New Jersey. A tick must generally be attached for 24–48 hours to transmit Lyme disease, but some co-infections (Anaplasmosis, Ehrlichia) can transmit faster. **Checking your pet for ticks after every outdoor excursion is essential.**

How to Remove a Tick Safely:

1. Use fine-tipped tweezers or a tick removal tool — never fingers, petroleum jelly, or a hot match.
2. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible.
3. Pull upward with steady, even pressure — do not twist or jerk.
4. Clean the bite site with rubbing alcohol or soap and water.
5. Dispose of the tick in alcohol, a sealed bag, or flush it — never crush with fingers.
6. Note the date and save the tick in a sealed bag if possible for identification.

■ Symptoms of Tick-Borne Disease — Watch for These:

- Sudden fever, lethargy, or loss of appetite within days to weeks of a tick exposure
- Joint swelling or stiffness, reluctance to walk or bear weight (Lyme disease)
- Bruising, bleeding from gums, or pinpoint red spots on skin (thrombocytopenia — Ehrlichia/Anaplasma)
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or sudden collapse (Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever — can be rapidly fatal)
- Neurological signs: head tilt, wobbling, or weakness (tick paralysis — caused by tick saliva, resolves after removal)
- Swollen lymph nodes, weight loss, or chronic low-grade illness weeks after known exposure

■ **Post-Exposure Testing — 6 to 8 Weeks After a Tick Bite:** The 4Dx Plus heartworm/tick panel (tests for Lyme, Ehrlichia, and Anaplasmosis antibodies) can take 4–8 weeks after infection to turn positive. If your pet was bitten by a tick but shows no symptoms, **schedule a 4Dx test 6–8 weeks post-exposure** — a negative test at the time of the bite does not rule out infection. Do not wait for symptoms to develop.

■ **If the 4Dx Comes Back Positive — PCR Testing:** A positive 4Dx antigen or antibody result confirms exposure but does not confirm active infection. Your vet may recommend a **PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test** to detect the actual DNA of the pathogen (*Borrelia burgdorferi* for Lyme, *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*, *Ehrlichia canis*, etc.). PCR distinguishes active infection from past exposure, guides treatment decisions, and monitors treatment response. In dogs with a positive Lyme 4Dx, a urine protein (C6 antibody quantitative + urine protein:creatinine ratio) should also be run to screen for Lyme nephritis.



■ **One Health — Why Prevention Is Bigger Than Your Pet:** Fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes don't stay in one lane. The diseases they carry move freely between animals, people, and ecosystems. **West Nile virus** and **heartworm** are spread by mosquitoes — both are tied to standing water, urban green spaces, and warm temperatures. **Lyme disease, Anaplasmosis, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever** are tick-borne illnesses that affect dogs and humans equally. **Bartonella (Cat Scratch Disease)** is transmitted by fleas and affects immunocompromised people most severely. Keeping your pet on year-round prevention doesn't just protect them — it reduces the local parasite burden for everyone in your household and community. One Health means animal health, human health, and environmental health are all connected. Prevention is one of the simplest ways to honor that connection.

■ **Schedule your pet's next flea, tick, and parasite prevention check today.** Year-round prevention in NYC is not optional — it is standard of care. The right product depends on your pet's species, lifestyle, and any concurrent heartworm or parasite prevention needs. XVetCare is happy to help you find the best protocol for your specific pet.

■ Final Summary

Year-round flea and tick prevention in NYC is not optional — it is standard of care. The right product depends on your pet's species, lifestyle, and any concurrent heartworm or parasite prevention needs. Ask your vet for a tailored recommendation.

■ Related XVC Guides:

- [Heartworm Prevention & Treatment](#) · [Parasite Prevention Overview](#)
- [Lyme Disease](#) · [Allergies in Dogs](#) · [Annual Wellness Exams](#)



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