

Editorial Board

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Iain is an RCVS recognised Advanced Veterinary Practitioner in Zoological Medicine. He runs his own practice at Newmarket Vets4Pets.

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Mark runs Re-Fur-All Referrals, a veterinary dermatology referral service in the south of England and the Midlands.

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Val is a specialist in small animal internal medicine working at Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists in Hampshire.

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Ian has a Master's degree in Veterinary Parasitology and is a member of the European Scientific Counsel Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP UK and Ireland).

Are endectocides the future of parasite control?

As a vet and a parasitologist, I always have a keen interest (and perhaps a little bit of excitement) when new products are launched for parasite control in cats and dogs. When I first graduated in 2002, the holy grail of cat and dog parasite control was a product which treated ticks, fleas, tapeworm and roundworm, allowing all UK parasites of significance (*Angiostrongylus vasorum* had yet to start its campaign to conquer the UK) to be eliminated in one fell swoop. It took many years for anything close to this to be released. Recently, several products have been launched for dogs that come close to ticking all of these boxes, along with one that treats all four groups of parasite (five including lungworm) in cats. Given that an evidence and risk-based approach is now encouraged for routine parasite treatment, the question is do these products, known as broad spectrum endectocides, still represent the future of parasite control or are they an aspiration of the past?

The ubiquitous nature of cat fleas (*Ctenocephalides felis*) means that all UK cats and dogs face exposure and require routine preventative treatment as a result. Cat fleas are prevalent throughout the UK, especially in strays, and have also adapted to living in our centrally heated homes, allowing year-round infestations. Cats visiting multiple households and pets can introduce fleas to a home, as can people who activate pupae outdoors and then carry newly emerged fleas into their homes. Once present, cat fleas will rapidly establish household infestations, causing misery to pets and owners, with significant risk of associated disease. The hunting cat, offal loving dog or pets living in endemic areas for lungworm will need treatment against a wide range of parasites on a regular basis, as well as fleas. Endectocides can be used as a single treatment, which improves compliance and simplifies treatment protocols.

However, few people would argue that all cats and dogs need to be treated against all parasites, for example, teacup dogs transported in handbags and fed cooked diets are unlikely to ever need tapeworm treatment and dogs living in areas where lungworm is not a risk will not require protection. Similarly, cats living indoors with adequate flea prevention will be safe from the perils of tapeworm and tick exposure. For these pets, use of a broad spectrum endectocide would represent 'over treatment', so it remains vital that effective, more targeted treatments are also available.

Therefore, endectocides do not represent a panacea cure-all treatment for all cats and dogs, nor would they be an over treatment for every cat and dog receiving them. They are a tool to be used wisely, following a lifestyle and geographic risk assessment. There are currently gaps in the evidence for their efficacy, meaning such assessments are not always easy, but the existence of both monovalent products and endectocides gives veterinary professionals the flexibility to prescribe the level of protection they believe each pet needs. **CA**



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