

## SUNSET LAKES ANIMAL CLINIC

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### Flea Season Can Be Tapeworm Season!

**The problem** begins with the flea...an enormously mobile insect. The flea can jump approximately 150 times its length, the equivalent of a man jumping the length of 3 football fields in a single bound.

The flea's range is expanded by its ability to hitch a ride with a mobile host, like a dog, cat, or human. So, even if your pet was free of fleas when you let him out, he could very easily bring home the unwanted visitors.

Fortunately, most pet owners are aware that fleas cause a variety of problems. What often is less well known is that fleas are the intermediate host for the most common tapeworm that affects dogs and cats.

Although not a serious health threat to the pet, tapeworms compete with the dog or cat host for nutrition. Tapeworms are also displeasing to pet owners who find wiggling, egg-filled segments on their pets or in their home. If you've noticed your pet frequently scratching or chewing at parts of his body, it is likely that fleas are present. Since we now know that fleas are present. Since we now know that fleas are the intermediate host for tapeworms, its time to be alert for other signs as well.

**Signs to look for** are "scooting" and egg-filled segments that can be described as looking like rice. As tapeworms mature in the small intestine the egg-filled segments break off and are excreted. Passed in the feces the segments, called proglottids, may irritate the anal area of the pet causing the pet to "scoot" in an effort to overcome the irritation. Other condition such as impacted anal glands can also cause this behavior.

**Fleas, tapeworms and people** Another unpleasant fact about fleas is that people are suitable hosts for tapeworms. If a flea is accidentally swallowed (most likely to occur among children) the result could be a tapeworm infection.

**Control & Prevention** of tapeworms is relatively easy. If your pet has tapeworms, he must see a veterinarian for a simple treatment for tapeworms. Prevention is even easier. There are a few different types of topical medications that you can purchase at your veterinarian's office, as well as keeping your pet away from other intermediate hosts such as rabbits & rodents. This program should be repeated 2 to 4 weeks after the first treat treatment. In severe infestations it is recommended that the yard and home be treated also

**If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.**