

## Tick & Flea Collars, Integrated Pest Management, and Your Safety

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Tick and flea collars are long-term pest control products for your pets. They kill pests or deter them from living and feeding on your pets. Some products last for 3 months, while others are effective for 8 months. The chemistries in these collars are designed to work on pests while reducing the possibility of negative side effects for you and your pets. But, exposure to these ingredients can be hazardous. **Repeated exposure—applying many collars daily—greatly increases the need for you to take special precautions like using gloves.**



**Let's Be Safe!** Many product labels include safety statements:

1. **Keep out of reach of children.**
2. **Avoid contact with eyes, skin or clothing.**
3. **Wash hands thoroughly with soap and cold water after fitting the collar.**
4. **Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before eating drinking, chewing gum, or using tobacco.**

Most active ingredients in flea and tick collars target the insect nervous system, a system shared with humans and therefore exposing us to some risks of adverse effects. Some flea and tick collars have insect growth regulators as active ingredients like methoprene and pyriproxyfen, which are generally safer to handle because those systems are specific to insects.

**Potential Illnesses & Poisonings:** The California Poison Control System (CPCS) received 4,322 calls related to flea control products from 1998–2007. Of those calls, 6.6% (287) involved exposure to a flea collar. Of the cases reported, 56% involved children under the age of 5; of these, one-quarter were children under the age of 2. Not every poisoning gets reported to the CPCS, so these are likely underestimates.

### Additional Resources:

Center for Disease Control Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever information page:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/rmsf/index.html>

Glove removal poster: <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/poster-how-to-remove-gloves.pdf>

Glove removal video: <http://www.safecare-gloves.com/>

EPA – Cancellation of Indoor Uses of Propoxur:

<https://www.epa.gov/safepestcontrol/companies-agree-stop-selling-pet-collars-containing-pesticide-protect-children>

EPA – Weighing Risks to Children from Dogs Wearing Seresto Collars:

<https://goo.gl/Ha5zNq>

For a printable copy of this pdf go to:

[https://cals.arizona.edu/crops/cotton/files/17Flea\\_Collar\\_short.pdf](https://cals.arizona.edu/crops/cotton/files/17Flea_Collar_short.pdf)

While these products are considered safe if used according to the label, **the need for caution is warranted especially if you are treating many animals.** Please follow these precautions.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Minimal PPE for most pesticides is long sleeves, long pants, shoes plus socks, gloves, and a hat. Wearing these materials while handling flea and tick collars will help keep pesticides from absorbing into your skin. **Most pesticide exposure occurs through the hands and wearing gloves can reduce that exposure by 99%. If you are applying multiple collars the need for PPE becomes even more important.**

### Glove Removal

1. With both hands gloved, grasp the outside of one glove at the top of your wrist, being careful not to touch your bare skin.
2. Peel off this first glove, peeling away from your body and from wrist to fingertips, turning the glove inside out.
3. Hold the glove you just removed in your gloved hand.
4. With your ungloved hand, peel off the second glove by inserting your fingers into the glove at the top of your wrist.
5. Turn the second glove inside out while tilting it away from your body, leaving the first glove inside the second.
6. Dispose of the gloves safely. Do not reuse the gloves.
7. Wash your hands thoroughly.

### Hand Washing

1. Rinse hands and arms up to the elbows.
2. Apply soap and lather for at least 15 seconds—sing the Happy Birthday song twice. Clean hands and arms, paying careful attention to finger nails.
3. Dry with paper towel.

### Integrate Pest Management (IPM) for Ticks

Three components are critical for management to be successful:

1. **Habitat manipulation:** Plants should be pruned away from buildings. Minimize weed growth around the home, remove brush and vegetation build-up, and keep grass mowed short. Reducing cover for ticks lowers humidity levels and causes ticks to dry out and die. Vacuum indoor areas daily especially around pet bedding areas and replace the vacuum bag each time. Launder pet bedding weekly.
2. **Removal of feeding ticks:** Dogs should be de-ticked daily by an adult. Be vigilant, conduct tick checks on children who play outdoors, and remove ticks immediately.
3. **Pesticides:** Apply a tick collar and monitor the efficacy of the collar over time—water exposure can reduce the effective life of the collar. Read all labeling, follow safety recommendations, and use PPE to reduce your exposure.

### Avoid These Mistakes

1. Avoid old fashioned tick collars with active ingredient propoxur.
2. Do not limit access of dogs to the living spaces the animal usually resides in. Seed ticks may have hatched in those areas, and if they cannot find a dog, they will find a human to feed on.

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