

Bug-Wise

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Eastern Tent Caterpillars and Horses: The angular-shaped webs that are so common in the crotches of black cherry trees right now are the tents of eastern tent caterpillars. This insect overwinters in egg masses that are deposited around the twigs of favored hosts. Black cherry is the most common host, but tents also occur on fruit trees and a number of other hardwoods. The caterpillars hatch in early spring and form a communal tent in the crotch of the host tree. Caterpillars use this tent as a refuge from which they venture forth to feed on nearby foliage. Full-grown caterpillars are often seen wandering about outside the web and on the ground, searching for a place to pupate. The white fuzzy cocoons are often found attached to tree trunks, fences, house siding, etc. There is only one generation per year.

Eastern tent caterpillars are generally dark in color and sparsely covered with light-colored hairs. They have a distinct white stripe down the center of the back and a broken pale blue stripe down each side. A closely related species, the forest tent caterpillar is similar in size and general appearance, but is easily distinguished by the row of keyhole shaped spots that runs down the center of the back, in place of the solid white line. Despite their name, forest tent caterpillars do not build tents; they build a white mat-like covering on the main trunk of the tree.

Damage is usually not serious on larger trees, but small trees can suffer substantial defoliation. One non-insecticidal method of control is to use a pole with a metal hook (easily made from a coat hanger) taped to the end to tear up the tent. This exposes the caterpillars to predators and results in mortality. However, they will rebuild, and the process may have to be repeated several times. In cases where an insecticide is deemed necessary, labeled treatments containing the active ingredient permethrin (there are many brand names) will be effective if they can be sprayed directly on, into, and around the web. In cases where the entire tree requires treatment, a treatment containing the active ingredient spinosad (Fertilome, Bore, Bagworm, Leafminer, and Tent Caterpillar Spray is one commonly available brand name), or a Bt product may be more appropriate.

Eastern tent caterpillars have been clearly implicated as the cause of a rash of foal abortions in Kentucky during 2001 and 2002. Estimated losses to the Thoroughbred industry exceeded \$300,000,000 in 2001 alone. Studies conducted in 2003 showed that early-term mares aborted when fed either whole caterpillars or just the exoskeletons of eastern tent caterpillars, but not when fed the insides of caterpillars or caterpillars that had been thoroughly homogenized. A subsequent study showed that eastern tent caterpillars could also trigger foal loss in late-term mares. The exact mechanism behind this phenomenon has not been fully worked out, but grazing mares can easily consume caterpillars that are wandering about on the ground just before pupation, as well as the shed skins of molting caterpillars. **This situation has not yet been reported or documented in Mississippi.** Still, it might be a wise precaution to avoid pasturing gestating mares in areas where there are a number of black cherry trees or other trees infested with eastern tent caterpillars.

‘On Pet Treatments’ for Ticks and Fleas: Fleas and ticks can be present year round, but they become much more plentiful in the spring and summer. When pets bring these pests into the lawn and home the potential for bites to humans increases. Protecting pets from these parasites also helps protect humans and helps prevent infestations in the yard and home. Fortunately, there are currently a number of very effective products that can be applied directly to the animal to control fleas. Some of these products work on both ticks and fleas, while some work only on fleas. Some control internal parasites while others do not. Some of these products may be used on dogs or cats, while some may not be used on cats.

The following table provides some general information on these products. Note that this table focuses on flea and tick products only. It is not intended to address products that are primarily used for internal parasite control. When using these types of ‘on pet treatments’ it is important to be sure that the product is labeled for use on the specific type of animal being treated (**some of these products are toxic to cats**) and that the rate is appropriate for the size of the animal. Many of these products come in different sized packages that are for animals of a specific weight range. Be sure to consult a veterinarian before using these products. Also, keep in mind that most of these flea and tick products do not control internal parasites. Some of the listed products require a prescription and may be purchased only through a veterinarian, but many are available locally or through online sources. Collars are generally less effective than spot-on type treatments.

Spot-On, Oral, and Collar-type Treatments for Control of Ticks and/or Fleas on Dogs and/or Cats

Product Name	Active Ingredient	Application method	Insects Controlled	For Use On
Frontline	Fipronil	Topical spot-on	Ticks & Fleas	Dogs or Cats
Frontline Plus	Fipronil + methoprene	Topical spot-on	Ticks & Fleas	Dogs or Cats
Advantage	Imidacloprid	Topical spot-on	Fleas	Dogs or Cats
K-9 Advantix	Imidacloprid + Permethrin	Topical spot-on	Ticks & Fleas	Dogs
Biospot for Dogs	Permethrin + Pyriproxyfen	Topical spot-on	Ticks & Fleas	Dogs
Biospot for Cats	Pyriproxyfen	Topical Spot-on	Ticks & Fleas	Cats
ProtiCall	Permethrin	Topical Spot-on	Ticks & Fleas	Dogs
Revolution	Selamectin	Topical Spot-on	Ticks & Fleas & (some internal parasites)	Dogs or Cats
Sentinel	Milbemycin oxime + Lufenuron	Oral Tablet	Fleas & (some internal parasites)	Dogs
Program	Lufenuron	Oral Tablet or Suspension	Fleas	Dogs or Cats
Program Plus	Milbemycin oxime + Lufenuron	Oral Tablet	Fleas & (some internal parasites)	Dogs
Capstar	Nitenpyram	Oral Tablet (Daily)	Fleas	Dogs or Cats
Preventic Collar	Amitraz	Collar	Ticks	Dogs
Preventic Plus Collar	Amitraz + Pyriproxyfen	Collar	Ticks & Fleas	Dogs

This information is for preliminary planning purposes only. Be sure to read labels carefully before purchasing product and follow label directions carefully when using products.