
Got Bugs?

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WE MAY HAVE A DRY HEAT, BUT DON'T TAKE THEM FOR GRANTED

Living in the desert is living in a dry heat, and this serves us with several advantages. One advantage is we only have a very small problem with insects, unlike so much of the country where residents constantly battle insects during the summer months. Such a dry environment does not allow many of the insects like mosquitoes and fleas to reproduce. Unfortunately, with every golf course we add, swimming pool we build, and water feature we create, in combination with humidity during periods of rainfall, these unwanted guests find sanctuary and reproduce.

So now we have bugs. Big deal! Actually, it can be a big deal, especially for our pets. Since many of these insects carry disease, we need to be cautious. Fleas, for example, in addition to attaching to the skin and feeding on your pet's blood, can also carry bubonic plague. This has not been shown to be a problem in the Valley¹, but at higher elevations (Flagstaff, for example) this is a real and constant threat. High-risk areas are where there is wildlife, especially prairie dogs. Prairie dog towns are a constant reservoir for diseases and plague. This is why there may be a huge, active prairie dog town one year and the next year there are none to be found.

Mosquitoes, like fleas, also carry disease. With rains, the mosquito population escalates, thus in part increasing the chance of transmission. Encephalitis in horses and heartworm disease in dogs and cats are two of the most common. Recently West Nile Virus (WNV) has come on the scene. WNV affects



¹ Ed. Note: the Valley of the Sun – the Phoenix metropolitan area



humans, birds, and horses, with vaccine being available for horses. Therefore, if your horses are not vaccinated against encephalitis or WNV or your dogs and cats are not on heartworm preventative, take action now. Both encephalitis and WNV in horses and heartworm disease in dogs and cats are severe and possibly fatal in many cases.

As small as they may be, insects should not be taken for granted. They may seem innocuous but can be potentially fatal to you or your pet. Take precautions by using flea and tick products, some of which will serve as mosquito repellents. Also be sure to vaccinate your horses for encephalitis and West Nile Virus and make sure your dogs and cats are on monthly heartworm protection. It is always best to consult your veterinarian about the safest and most efficient methods of treatment as well as preventive medicine to avoid potential health risk and unwanted expense.

