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CAPC Responds to EPA Plan for Topical Parasite Products for Pets

BEL AIR, Md. (May 12, 2010) – In response to the EPA’s plan to handle topical parasite control complaints, which was published March 14, 2010, in the *Federal Register*, the Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC) says the plan doesn’t go far enough in addressing the core concerns of the veterinary profession as it relates to responsible use of “spot-on” products for pets.

Last year the EPA issued a statement alerting consumers and health care professionals of the possible increased incidence of adverse events associated with the use of spot-on parasite control products for pets. Last March, the EPA held a follow-up meeting with manufacturers of these products and to discuss their findings and recommendations.

According to Mike Paul, DVM, executive director of the CAPC, the goal of the EPA’s complaint mitigation plan should not simply be to report the individual incidence of an adverse event, but to evaluate the severity and prevalence of the event and view all adverse events in light of the benefits associated with a topical parasite control product when used according to label directions.

The CAPC believes the EPA plan falls short in three key areas: 1) assessing and classifying the severity of the reported adverse event; 2) evaluating the percentage of adverse incidents based on the total number of applied doses of a product; and 3) including information on if the products were purchased and applied under the direction of a veterinarian.

“Many of the topical flea and tick control products in question are intended for use under the guidance of a licensed veterinarian and, yet, many similar or even identical products are available in retail outlets and on the Internet where they can be purchased with no professional guidance,” says Dr. Paul. “Unfortunately, the EPA has failed to estimate the percentage of adverse events associated with products purchased from veterinarians versus retail outlets. Without veterinary guidance, there can be no certainty that the products were used as intended, at the intervals intended and at the dosage or even on the species intended.”

While CAPC is focused on the control and prevention of parasites, the pet health industry is particularly committed to the safety and wellbeing of companion animals. “We do not want unsafe products on the market and we advocate for appropriate precautions to reduce adverse

events,” Dr. Paul adds. “However, it is vital that products be evaluated fairly and individually with regard to the nature and severity of adverse events.”

In recent years, the awareness and utilization of topical parasite control and prevention products has increased significantly, as has the proliferation of products available over the Internet and from mass retailers. In 2008 according to the EPA, 270 million doses were dispensed, primarily for flea and tick control.

“We believe the lack of direct professional involvement between veterinarian and pet owner increases the possibility of such events, not a lack of adequate information on existing labels. Those pet owners who do not presently read label precautions will not be better informed by revised labels they also fail to read. We strongly advocate that the veterinary professional be the source of information for the pet owning consumer and that only products specifically dispensed or recommended by trained professionals be used by pet owners.”

The Companion Animal Parasite Council (www.capcvet.org) is an independent not-for-profit foundation comprised of parasitologists, veterinarians, medical, public health and other professionals that provide information for the optimal control of internal and external parasites that threaten the health of pets and people. Formed in 2002, the CAPC works to help veterinary professionals and pet owners develop the best practices in parasite management that protect pets from parasitic infections and reduce the risk of zoonotic parasite transmission.

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