

Thousands of Pet Deaths Linked to This Flea and Tick Collar

Is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) intentionally turning a blind eye to the thousands of pet deaths linked to this flea and tick preventative? Here's what you need to know about their dangerous side effects.

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- A federal watchdog report criticized the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's evaluation system for the Seresto flea and tick collar, citing outdated methods and unreliable systems in assessing its safety for pets and humans
- The Seresto collar, introduced in 2012, contains two insecticides (imidacloprid and flumethrin), making it highly effective against parasites but also extremely hazardous to pets, people and the environment
- Over 100,000 incident reports and 3,000 pet deaths have been associated with Seresto collars, leading to lawsuits and concerns about its adverse effects
- A \$15 million settlement was approved for damages caused by Seresto collars, but some pet owners consider it inadequate and "an insult" to what they and their pets went through
- The EPA declined recommendations to reassess the collar's safety, stating they have other mechanisms to address concerns, while critics argue the agency lacks veterinary expertise to properly evaluate pet risks

On February 29, 2024, the federal watchdog Office of the Inspector General released a deeply critical report¹ regarding the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "deeply flawed system" when evaluating the safety of the Seresto flea and tick collar — and whether it is truly safe for both pets and humans.

The pet collar, which was introduced in 2012, is made for dogs at least 7 weeks old and cats at least 10 weeks old. It works by releasing two active insecticides to eliminate fleas and ticks.² However, the product has garnered plenty of criticism after there were reports of pets falling ill, and even dying, after using the collar.

Now, the federal watchdog is calling out the agency for using "outdated and unreliable systems" to evaluate the safety of this flea and tick preventative. In a press release, Nathan Donley, environmental health science director of the Center for Biological Diversity, said:³

"This report exposes in disturbing detail what many of us have known all along, that the EPA's oversight of Seresto is absolutely abysmal. We urge the agency to quickly implement all the recommendations from the Inspector General's Office and finally begin to protect the public instead of neglecting its duties."

Two Highly Toxic Insecticides in One Product — What Could Go Wrong?

The significant issue with Seresto pet collars, which (ironically) is also what makes it more efficient compared to other chemical flea and tick preventatives sold in the market, is it contains two insecticides — the only pest control collar to do so. These active ingredients are imidacloprid and flumethrin.

Imidacloprid, a neonicotinoid insecticide, is the most commonly used insecticide in the U.S. However, neonicotinoids have been causing massive die-offs of pollinators, like butterflies, bees and songbirds; they not only harm your pet, but the environment as well.

Despite its toxicity, the EPA proposed re-approving imidacloprid in 2020. Meanwhile, flumethrin, a pyrethroid insecticide, has been linked to troubling health effects,⁴ such as skin lesions, lethargy, tremors and loss of coordination.⁵

When combined, these two create synergistic effects that are highly lethal to fleas and ticks — and hazardous to pets and even humans.

Over 100,000 Incident Reports and 3,000 Pet Deaths Associated with Seresto Collars

The concerns over Seresto pet collar's dangers have been an issue for several years now, and an estimated 100,000 incident reports have been raised over its harmful effects on both pets and humans, with 3,000 pets having died after using the pet collar.⁶

Lethargy, abnormal behavior, skin lesions, seizures⁷ and cancerous growths⁸ are examples of adverse effects seen in pets that wore the collar. These appeared mostly within the first month of using the product.

In 2021, two pet owners filed a class action lawsuit against Elanco Animal Health, the pharmaceutical company that produced Seresto collars, after their product led to the deaths of their pets. A Siberian Husky developed a cancerous tumor on her neck, while a terrier mix died after they wore the collar. Twenty-seven more people joined the lawsuit, claiming their pets also experienced detrimental effects from the product.⁹

During a 2022 hearing before the Committee on Oversight and Reform's subcommittee on economic and consumer policy, pet parents shared the suffering their pets went through after using the collar. CBS News reports:¹⁰

"One pet owner, Thoomas Mairino, of Mt. Laurel, New Jersey, said that the family's dog suffered from increasingly severe symptoms, including a bleeding patches on her stomach and a seizure, after they began using a Seresto collar on the advice of their veterinarian. Although they consulted with several other vets, her condition worsened, and the family eventually decided to have the dog put down.

'The final 18 months of her life were agonizing to watch,' he told lawmakers. 'If I could help prevent another family from going through what my family went through, I wanted to act.'"

Elanco Receives a Slap on the Wrist for Endangering Thousands of Pets

In January 2024, a federal judge in Illinois approved a \$15 million settlement for the damages caused by Seresto pet collars — a move that pet parents considered "an insult." Yahoo! News explains:¹¹

"[T]he proposed settlement ... would pay out \$13 for each Seresto collar purchased with receipts or a maximum of \$26 without them.

Pet owners would receive \$25 per pet for medical treatment or 100% of medical treatment costs not reimbursed with documentation.

The settlement calls for paying out \$300 per pet death plus burial or cremation costs."

Pet parent Mickey Hearn, whose dog Buddy become severely ill after using the collar, says, "The settlement is equivalent to a parking ticket ... a \$15 million settlement with a company that's making half a billion dollars a year on a product is not a punishment to them."¹²

The EPA Isn't Doing Enough to Protect Our Companion Animals

Elanco stays firm and assures consumers that their product is "safe." In the 2022 hearing, CEO Jeffrey Simmons reiterated the safety of the pet collar, as it was approved by the EPA and had undergone over 80 safety, toxicity and efficacy studies.¹³

They also mentioned in their website that they "had not identified a single death caused by the active ingredients in the collar" and that the incident reports are "trending downward."¹⁴ In a New York Post article,¹⁵ Keri McGrath, a spokeswoman for the company, said:

"It is critically important to understand that a report is not an indication of cause," she wrote. "What those numbers represent is the number of reports received, and do not reflect causality."

However, the report from the Office of Inspector General highlighted the need for the EPA to determine whether Elanco's pet collars "pose an unreasonable risk to pet health," because despite their review and approval, they have "not provided assurance" about the product's safety.

Nevertheless, the EPA declined these recommendations — instead, they insisted that they have other mechanisms to address product concerns. They also mentioned that the new requirements imposed on Elanco were "enough to keep pets safe."¹⁶ An article in Investigate Midwest concludes:

"The EPA lacks a standard operating procedure for reviewing the risks to pets, and it was unclear to the inspector general's office where the responsibility for reviewing risks to pets resides. One agency official said a lack of veterinary expertise likely contributes to the issue."¹⁷

Make the Switch to Nontoxic Flea and Tick Alternatives

Virtually all forms of chemical flea and tick products come with adverse effects. As pet parents, it is up to you to be vigilant and avoid those that put your family, including your furry family members, in harm's way. Instead, switch to safer alternatives like:

- A safe **natural pest deterrent**
- **Fresh garlic** — Feed small amounts to your dogs and cats (Give one-fourth teaspoon per 15 pounds of body weight every day).
- **Cedar oil**

- **Natural, food-grade diatomaceous earth** — Apply this topically, but avoid putting it on their face

In addition, you can keep fleas and ticks at bay by making sure to feed your pet a nutritionally optimal, species-appropriate diet made from fresh foods, in order to bolster their innate immune defenses. Bathe and brush their fur regularly and always check for flea and ticks.

If your pet spends plenty of time outdoors, check them every night, especially during tick season. Using a flea and tick comb also helps remove parasites while exfoliating their skin.

Sources and References

^{1,6} [EPA Office of Inspector General, "The EPA Needs to Determine Whether Seresto Pet Collars Pose an Unreasonable Risk to Pet Health," February 29, 2024](#)

² [AVMA, July 7, 2022](#)

³ [Center for Biological Diversity, February 29, 2024](#)

⁴ [Center for Biological Diversity, April 8, 2021](#)

⁵ [Petbucket, Flumethrin](#)

^{7,10,13} [CBS News, June 17, 2022](#)

^{8,9} [The Daytona Beach News-Journal, March 2, 2024](#)

^{11,12} [Yahoo! News, March 16, 2024](#)

¹⁴ [Elanco, Your Pet and You](#)

¹⁵ [New York Post, March 2, 2021](#)

^{16,17} [Investigate Midwest, August 19, 2024](#)
