



Delivering a Healthy WA



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Health**

## Reports of members of the public using animal flea products to treat head lice in children

The Department of Health has received reports indicating that dog and cat flea treatments are being used by members of the public to treat children with head lice. In response to these reports, the Department of Health is advising parents against this practice and of the potential risk to the health of children if treated with animal flea treatments.

Animal flea treatment products are specifically made for the treatment of dogs and cats and are clearly labelled “For Animal Treatment Only”.

The active ingredient in the products of concern is Fipronil. Fipronil is a phenylpyrazole insecticide and acts to block the normal functioning of the central nervous system in insects and also mammals.

Fipronil has been reported as causing eye irritation, skin reactions, nausea and nervous system effects in adults.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), the Commonwealth authority responsible for the registration of pesticide products, is reviewing Fipronil following a number of reports of adverse experiences, such as skin reactions in owners after patting pets treated with Fipronil. The APVMA noted the potential of Fipronil to form toxic photodegradation products. For further information on the APVMA review of Fipronil, see the website located at [www.apvma.gov.au/chemrev/fipronil.shtml](http://www.apvma.gov.au/chemrev/fipronil.shtml)

Flea treatment products for pets are made for animal use only. In Western Australia, use contrary to label directions is an offence under the Health (Pesticides) Regulations, 1956. Veterinary medications are not formulated for human use and could cause adverse health effects when applied to humans.

For more information contact the Toxicology Branch of the Environmental Health Directorate on 9388 4932.

## Recommended lice treatment

For further Department of Health advice on treatments for head lice see the website at: <http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/cproot/473/2/Head%20Lice%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>