

HOW PET FUR CAN HARM NESTING BIRDS

THE HIDDEN HARM IN PET FUR

To keep our pets healthy and free from parasites, we commonly treat them with pest-killing chemicals, often **fipronil** and **imidacloprid**. Whilst these substances do benefit our pets, they harm wildlife, including pollinators and the birds that eat them. By 2018, this meant that fipronil and imidacloprid had **been banned from use on farms in the EU**.

But these chemicals are **still used** for pet's flea treatments! Their usage is especially harmful when the flea treatment is applied directly to the pet's skin and fur, allowing the insecticides to **leach** into the local environment.



THE DANGER TO BIRDS

After grooming their pets, many people leave the excess fur outside, offering it to birds for their nests. While this can improve nest insulation, recent research has revealed some unknown impacts...

Scientists found that **great tit and blue tit nests that had more insecticides had significantly more dead chicks and unhatched eggs**. This study also highlighted how nests in areas with higher densities of household pets had higher insecticides concentrations, and higher chick mortality!



WIDER CONCERN

1. POLLINATORS

Once these insecticides are present in the environment, they can harm pollinators. Just one dose of monthly flea treatment for a large dog can kill 25 million bees!



2. HUMANS

The presence of these chemicals in our freshwater and homes is expected to increase our risk of cardiovascular diseases and other medical conditions.



HOW CAN WE HELP?

- **Change your pet's flea treatment method** - oral or injectible treatments can be less harmful for wildlife, as it reduces the risk of the chemicals leaching into the environment.
- **Try alternative pest prevention** - using herbal-based sprays or home remedies (but please consult a vet before trying this!)
- **Avoid letting your pet play in lakes and waterways after treatment** - this will reduce the spread of chemicals in the environment.
- **Advocate for a total ban of fipronil and imidacloprid in the UK.**

DID YOU KNOW...?

That in addition to fur, great tits use grass, plant fibres, moss, and even feathers to build their nests!

GLOSSARY



Insecticides → chemicals that kill insects, they are commonly used to manage some parasites on livestock, pets and humans as well as insect that damage crops

Fipronil → a common insecticide used in flea treatments and the pest control of corn fields and golf courses. It was banned for agricultural use in the EU in 2013.

Imidacloprid → another common insecticide used for to control pests in agriculture, gardens and trees as well as treating fleas on pets. Before the EU ban in 2018, it was the most used insecticide worldwide!

Pollinators → an animal (often an insect!) that spreads pollen between plants, which will help them produce seeds. Bees are a typical example but many wasps, ants, flies and even beetles also help pollinate plants!

Waterways → bodies of water which regularly flow, this includes river and canals.

