

HUMAN AND CANINE INFECTIONS ARE RARE

Parasitologist Dwight Bowman, Ph.D., at Cornell has a possible explanation for dogs' rarely suffering cuterebra infestations. "We don't see it much in dogs, and we don't know why, but many dogs are on heartworm and flea and tick preventives, and they may have an effect in protecting them."

His recommendations for owners: Put your cat on the same preventives if he's not already on them. And don't let him outdoors until after the first frost, when botflies, which produce cuterebra, become inactive. Better yet, consider keeping him indoors all the time.

Finally, don't worry that you could be at the risk for an infestation from your cat. "Pet owners cannot get cuterebra from their pets," says Susan P. Montgomery, DVM, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "This is a fly larva — it's the fly that transmits, so handling a pet that has a larva infection does not lead to human infection. Human infection could happen the same way that pet infection happens."