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# Amazon is reviewing best-selling Seresto flea collar after reports of illnesses, deaths

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Amazon, the world's largest online retailer, said this week it will consider whether to continue selling Seresto flea-and-tick collars after media reports that they have been linked to more than 75,000 pet injuries and almost 1,700 pet deaths.

The announcement came after the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting and USA TODAY exposed the large number of complaints the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency received about the collars, which use pesticides to kill ticks and fleas.

Amazon, where the Seresto collar is the top-selling flea and tick collar, said the company is “looking into the product in question,” spokeswoman Mary Kate McCarthy said.

“Safety is a top priority for Amazon,” she said. “We actively monitor our store for product safety concerns including customer feedback and product reviews and have proactive measures in place to prevent unsafe or non-compliant products from being listed. When appropriate, we remove products and reach out to suppliers, manufacturers and government agencies for additional information.”

The producers of the collars, Elanco Animal Health, said its product rarely hurts animals, citing internal data. Keri McGrath, a company spokeswoman, said the company “takes the safety of our products very seriously and thoroughly investigates potential concerns related to their use.”

Although the majority of reviews on Amazon about the collar are positive, dozens of comments raised concerns about pets being harmed by the collar. Pet owners have also posted about incidents involving the collars on social media and other sites related to pet ownership.

Other top online retailers that sell the collars – Chewy.com and Walmart – did not respond to requests for comment.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which regulates the product because it contains pesticides, issued a new statement on Thursday morning in response to the story.

EPA “takes reports of incidents like these very seriously,” the new statement said, and it encourages pet owners to contact their veterinarians and the National Pesticide Information Center, which is trained in responding to these incidents.

“EPA understands that pets are part of the family in many American households and the agency is committed to following the science and the law as we work to address this issue and pursue our mission,” an agency spokesman said in an email.

In another statement issued Wednesday, the agency appeared to place blame on the Trump administration, though the Obama administration first approved the flea and tick collar and was in charge during the course of many of the adverse incident reports.

“Under the Biden-Harris Administration EPA has returned to its core mission, which includes protecting our pets’ health,” the agency said.

Karen McCormack, a retired EPA staffer, said the agency has known about the issue for years but has not taken action on the pesticides involved in the product.

Seresto, developed by Bayer and now sold by Elanco, works by releasing small amounts of pesticides onto the animal for months at a time. The pesticides in the collar are supposed to kill fleas, ticks and other pests but be safe for cats and dogs.

The collars have been linked to at least 1,698 pet deaths, 75,000 incidents of pet harm and hundreds of humans being harmed, according to EPA documents. The incidents span eight years – between 2012 when the product first hit the market and June of 2020.

These numbers are almost certainly an underestimate, said Nathan Donley, a senior scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals runs an animal poison control center, where pet owners call in with complaints about their pets being harmed. Spokesman Savee Dalgo said the organization has no reported deaths related to the collar.

Dalgo said the organization recommends all collars are bought from veterinarians or veterinary retailers.

Dr. Douglas Kratt, president of the American Veterinary Medical Association, said in an emailed statement that it's important to consider the benefits of the collars alongside any concerns. Kratt said that the manufacturer "has indicated that reports of adverse events have occurred at a rate of less than 0.3%, with most of those reports reflecting mild hair loss or skin irritation."

"The risk associated with the use of medical products is never zero, so we need to weigh the risk with the reward – in this case, protection against parasites that can seriously harm animal and human health," Kratt said. "As always, pet owners with concerns should talk with their veterinarian about finding a parasite control plan that's safe and effective for their individual pets."

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