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Flea Control

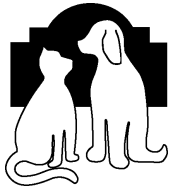
Adult fleas are wingless biting insects approximately 1/8 of an inch in size. There are four life stages: egg, larvae, pupae, and adult. The adult flea hops on your pet, bites and takes a blood meal, and may stay or hop off into the environment again. If the flea is female she may lay eggs while on your pet which may stay in the fur or drop off onto the floor, ground or bedding. The flea larval and pupal stages take place in the environment until finally new adult fleas are hatched. The main point being that adult fleas infest pets transiently. The majority of the fleas' life is spent in the environment and, therefore, it is possible for your pets to have fleas without you being able to find one on his/her coat. For every flea that you find on your pet it means that there are hundreds more in varying life stages in your pet's environment.

Other signs you can look for to determine if there are fleas are 'flea dirt' and tapeworms. 'Flea dirt' is the common term for flea excrement; it looks like black pepper, and when it is wet it turns a brownish red color due to the fleas diet being blood. If you see flea dirt on your pet or on the bedding where he/she spends a large amount of time then your pet has fleas. Tapeworms are long white worms that live in the intestines of their hosts. When a female tapeworm reaches maturity she begins releasing egg packets which look like grains of white rice or sesame seeds. Sometimes these egg packets move making them look like they are alive. The most common way for pets to get tapeworms is by ingesting fleas as fleas often carry baby forms of tapeworms in their bodies. If your pet has tapeworms then at some point in its life it had fleas.

It is common knowledge that flea bites are itchy. What you may not know is what else flea bites can cause.

- 1) The most common allergy in dogs is flea allergy. Cats can also be allergic to fleas/ flea bites. In animals that are allergic it only takes one or two bites to have them itching badly for up to two weeks. The severe itching can also lead to redness, hair loss, abrasions, and infections. In these pets flea control is an absolute must.
- 2). Tapeworms were already discussed. Tapeworms are relatively easy to get rid of, but if the flea infestation is not controlled the pet will just reinfest itself with tapeworms.
- 3) Heavy infestation with fleas can also lead to anemia (too few red blood cells) especially in puppies and kittens. Signs of anemia include pale gums and lethargy. Sometimes it is so bad that treatment requires hospitalization and transfusions.
- 4) There are certain blood parasites that can be transmitted by fleas. The most common is Hemobartonella which attaches to red blood cells in cats and causes anemia. About 33% of cats infected with Hemobartonella do not survive.
- 5) Plague, yes the same sort of disease as the Black Plague of the Middle Ages still exists in the the US and even California. This very rare disease is transmissible by fleas to both cats and people. Signs may include weakness, fever, trouble breathing, and abscesses.

While some of these conditions are rare, allergies and tapeworms are very common. Good flea control can be a very important part of keeping your pet comfortable, healthy, and happy.



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There are several different types of flea control both for pets and for environmental control. It is necessary to use both flea control for pets and for the environment to get rid of an infestation. To prevent infestation you may choose to use flea control primarily on your pet(s).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL:

- 1) Vacuuming provides a good way to get rid of a large number of flea eggs, larvae, and pupae. Make a special effort to get the corners of the room and any cracks/crevices in the floor. Make sure to either throw out your vacuum bag after vacuuming or vacuum up flea powder. This prevents your vacuum cleaner from becoming a flea incubator.
- 2) Washing your pets' bedding on a weekly basis in hot water may help control an infestation.
- 3) There are insecticide sprays and foggers, some of which you can apply yourself and some which are applied by an exterminator. Siphotrol II premise spray is most effective, which contains pyrethrins and methoprene which works against adults and hatching juveniles. Make sure they come with a guarantee and use methoprene (Precor) or pyriproxifen (Nylar) as well as an adulticide. Make sure to consult the label or your exterminator as to whether pets can be present during application and if not how long they need to be out of the house.
- 4) Fleabusters is a company that supplies a dessicant, not an insecticide, that dehydrates flea larvae and stops them from developing into adult fleas. You may apply their product yourself or have them apply it for you. If they apply it they give you a one year guarantee against fleas in your home. Their website is: <http://fleabuster.com>.