

FLEAS - THE FACTS

"Why do I need to treat my pet for fleas, and why so often?"

This is a question we are asked all the time, and here's why.

So, what is a flea? It's a tiny dark brown parasitic insect that infests the coat and skin of pets.

How do you tell if my pet has fleas? Well, usually the first sign of a flea infestation is an irritated and scratching pet. If you look closely you might even be able to see an adult flea on your pet's coat or at the base of the fur on the skin. You might also find flea dirt which looks like small black specks of grit, like ground pepper. This is actually digested dried blood!!

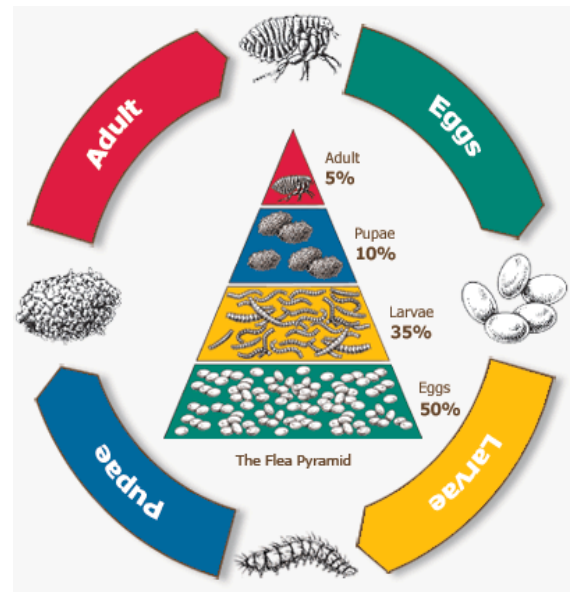
How does my pet get fleas? A flea can jump up to 150 times their own length which is like a human being jumping over 300 meters!!!! This amazing skill allows the flea to move easily between hosts and their environment. Fleas and their eggs can remain dormant for long periods of time in the garden, in your carpet and furniture or within the cracks of tiles and floorboards. Once they are able to find a host they can get on with the business of reproducing.

And before you think an indoor only pet is safe, fleas in all of their stages are easy to transport from place to place. This means that even if your pet never goes outside, they could still be exposed from being brought into their environment by their human.

Why do I need to treat my pet all year round? An adult flea can lay up to 50 eggs a day and up to 2000 eggs in their lifetime. If you see a flea on your pet, you can be sure that this will only represent 5 to 10% of the overall flea problem in your home. The rest will be in your carpets, furniture, bedding and garden environment as eggs or larvae. Our homes are an ideal, year round environment for fleas to thrive mainly because of central heating, so even during the Winter months, a flea can continue reproducing.

They are also the number one cause of skin disease in pets and can cause problems from a simple skin itch to more painful problems such as weeping sores, scaly skin and a strong smell. Some pets can even be allergic to flea bites which can cause a horrible reaction. Fleas can also transmit tapeworms in dogs and cats and can also bite us!!

It is MUCH easier and usually cheaper to prevent a flea problem than it is to eliminate the problem. Get into a good preventative routine BEFORE you see fleas.



So, what's going on that I can't see? Out of sight, out of mind isn't always a great philosophy! Just because you can't see something happening, it doesn't mean it isn't happening. What you can't see going on is:

- An adult flea will jump onto your pet to feed.
- Once fed, the flea will start laying eggs which drop off into the carpet, bedding etc before hatching.
- Once hatched, the larvae will move away from light and seek a darker, deeper spot to develop into pupae. Whilst there, the larvae will feed on skin, hair and other organic debris. At this stage they can consume tapeworm eggs allowing them to become a host for the development of tapeworms.
- The pupae then hatch into adult fleas, find a host to have their first blood meal and being laying eggs into the environment, and so the cycle continues.

What's available to treat my pet? A preventative, proactive approach to parasite control is straight forward and in most cases easy to administer. There are many products available which can work in different ways but a good quality, veterinary prescribed product will give you and your pet the very best protection.

Some will prevent an adult flea from reproducing by making them "sterile". Others kill the flea once they've fed on your pet's blood or skin and hair debris. However, no product can kill at the pupae stage so it's important to maintain your pet's protection to expose any pupae to the product once they have hatched into adult fleas.

No product will provide life-long protection so you will need to maintain the correct level of protection throughout the year. This will ensure that any new contact with fleas at any stage will be stopped before they can get a grip on your pet and home environment.

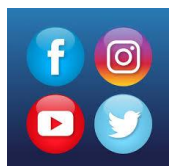
Is there anything else I can do to control fleas? Yes, there's lots you can do and they can be a part of your normal household cleaning routine.

- Vacuuming your carpets and floors 2-3 times a week will remove eggs and stimulate any dormant fleas, allowing them to be exposed to your preventative treatment and ending their lifecycle.
- Wash pet bedding weekly in a washing machine and leave (if possible) in the sun to dry.
- Spray your home with a professional adult flea killer, following manufacturer's instructions at all times.

Our staff are fully trained in flea management so get in contact. You can also book in for a complimentary flea consultation to discuss your own particular needs.

FLEA TRIVIA

- ❖ Undisturbed and without a blood meal, a flea can live for more than 100 days. On average, a flea can live for two to three months.
- ❖ Female fleas cannot lay eggs until after their first blood meal. Once fed, they can lay eggs within 36-48 hours after a meal.
- ❖ Female fleas can consume 15 times their own body weight in blood daily.
- ❖ Flea larvae are blind.
- ❖ The largest flea ever recorded is the North American Hystrichopsylla Schefferi. It measured 12mm or almost 1/2 inch!!!



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