

Flea Free

Fleas are more than an annoyance, they can make life for you and your pet miserable. Not only do fleas create a never ending cycle of biting and scratching, but these little bugs can also cause serious health problems including flea allergy dermatitis, anemia, or tapeworm infections in some pets. You're not safe either because fleas will bite people (although they prefer an animal).

Flea Life Cycle

One needs to understand the basic flea life cycle in order to decide on an appropriate flea control strategy. Fleas are blood-sucking parasites that go through four stages: egg, larvae, pupae, and adult.

Eggs: Adult female fleas lay eggs (up to 50 per day) on your pet. These small eggs are not sticky and quickly fall off your pet into nearby bedding, cracks, carpet / furniture areas frequented by your pet.

Larvae: Eggs hatch tiny worm-like larvae which molt twice, then spin cocoons, where they grow to pupae.

Pupae: Pupae remain inside a cocoon for a few weeks (or up to a year depending on environment) and are resistant to insecticides.

The adult fleas emerge from the cocoon when they detect heat, vibrations and carbon dioxide - indicating that a host (animal) should be nearby.

Adults: Adult fleas hop onto a host, mate and begin the life cycle all over again in as little as 3 weeks. An adult flea lives approximately 30-100 days on the host and can lay up to 2,000 eggs in it's lifetime. Adult fleas spend almost all of their time on your pet.

In a typical flea population, only 5% are in adult stage, while the eggs and larvae make up 85% of the flea population.

Flea Prevention

The best approach to managing fleas is prevention!!! There are currently safer and more effective products on the market rather than the traditional pesticide - spray/dip methods of the past.

The best way to control a flea problem is to prepare for fleas before they become a problem!

We recommend and provide the following products to protect your pet against fleas:

Sentinel

SENTINEL is a once-a-month *parasite protection pill*. It combines the advantages of Interceptor (heartworm- roundworm-whipworm-hookworm protection) with protection against flea infestations.

Sentinel contains the ingredient, Lufenuron, which sterilizes flea eggs so that you stop the flea's life cycle (remember that 1 flea can produce 2,000 eggs for 2,000 new fleas...). It is not a pesticide, so you do not have to worry about pesticide residues on your pet or in your home.

If there is a need to kill any adult fleas, there is another pill, *Capstar*, that can be given to kill the adult fleas.

Frontline

FRONTLINE is another great product that is used topically once-a-month to kill fleas and ticks. The ingredient of *Frontline* is fipronil and is placed on one skin spot between the pet's shoulder blades. *Frontline* is much safer to use on pets than traditional permethrin pesticides!

Flea Warnings

Don't be fooled by 'cheap', over-the-counter topical flea products. Generally, they do not work very well and use the old permethrin insecticides that have caused severe toxic reactions in pets!! Remember, you generally get what you pay for.

Traditional flea shampoos, sprays and dips containing permethrins are still available but are not nearly as effective or as safe to use! These products are especially toxic to cats.

Flea collars are not recommended

for pets. They are very slow to kill fleas and do not control fleas on all areas of the pet's body, including near the tail and back legs where most fleas are found!

Current Flea Problem

What if I already have a flea problem? A successful flea control program must involve the household, the affected pet, and all other animals in contact with the affected pet. Battling a flea infestation requires patience and perseverance!! Because the life cycle of the flea is 3-4 weeks, it will take at least that long to completely rid your environment!

#1 - VACUUM. Thoroughly vacuum floors, rugs, carpets, upholstered furniture, crevices and baseboards DAILY to remove flea eggs & larvae. Vacuuming is very effective in picking up adults and stimulating preemerged adults to leave their cocoon. (Remember fleas hatch from cocoons when they detect heat, vibration and carbon dioxide - your vacuum therefore mimics an animal/host!)

When you are done vacuuming, make sure to destroy the bag or place it in a sealed ziploc bag so the fleas can't develop or escape!

#2 - Launder pet bedding in hot, soapy water at least once a week.

#3 - Treat your pet with an appropriate product to kill adult fleas, such as Frontline.

#4 - Use insecticides, if needed, inside the home.

#5 - Outdoor treatment may be necessary if your pet spends considerable time outside.

#6 - Consult your veterinarian for any questions concerning your individual flea problem.

#7 - Read all insecticide label directions carefully before buying insecticides and before applying them to ensure their proper use!

As a final note, whether or not you actually see fleas on your pet, they may be there...preventing them is much easier and safer than trying to treat them after you find them!!