

MORE ABOUT FLEAS

Warm weather always brings with it the hazards of a flea infestation on your pet and in your home. We hope to answer some of your more frequently voiced concerns about managing this potential threat to your pet's health. Remember also, as carriers of human plague, fleas have claimed more human victims in the recorded history of the world than all wars. So, flea control is in your best health interest as well.

WHY WORRY ABOUT FLEAS? While some cats and dogs are only slightly annoyed by this ectoparasite, others develop extensive skin lesions and loss of fur from an allergic reaction to the flea bites. If this is the case, aggressive medical treatment is called for. Also, some people are allergic to flea bites and suffer excruciating skin reactions when bitten by a flea. This matters a great deal if they have pets who bring fleas into the home environment.

Other problems related to flea infestation of a pet include transmission of one species of tapeworm in the cat and in the dog. Also, the amount of blood a flea draws from a cat or dog can cause mild anemia in some cases and death in others, particularly in puppies and kittens.

HOW DOES MY PET BECOME A VICTIM OF FLEAS? Typically, a cat or dog (the host) picks up fleas by walking through a flea-infested area, such as the yard. The flea is attracted by the passing animal and hops on for a blood meal. After the blood meal, the flea mates and proceeds to lay eggs which fall off your pet in either your home or yard. One to two hundred eggs are laid in successive batches. One adult female flea can give rise to 100,000 fleas in one month! The adult flea lives up to one year and can survive as long as two months without a host.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY PET IS SCRATCHING AND DIGGING AT ITS SKIN BECAUSE OF FLEAS? You may actually see fleas or flea dirt if you part your pet's fur and inspect closely, particularly in areas such as the groin, throat, or over the rump. Flea dirt looks like small black specks in the fur. If these specks are moistened with water, they will turn pink from the blood the flea has ingested.

WHY CAN FLEAS BE SO DIFFICULT TO ERADICATE? It is necessary to understand the fleas' life cycle to answer this question. The eggs hatch, giving rise to larvae, in as few as 4-5 days but depending upon environmental conditions, eggs can hatch up to two years later. Larvae feed on debris and flea dirt, molting twice in the span of 9-20 days. A third molt and the cocoon stage, lasting from seven days to one year, follow. The adult emerges from the cocoon and seeks its first blood meal from you or your pet.

HOW DO I RID MY LIVING ENVIRONMENT FROM FLEAS, LARVAE AND THE EGGS? Rigorous housekeeping indoors with frequent vacuuming of crevices around windows and walls is a must. Remember to treat the inside of your vacuum cleaner bag with flea spray. Carpeting, drapes and furniture, as well as your yard, should be sprayed with an insecticide to kill successive hatches of adult fleas.

Several good products containing an insect growth regulator to kill both larvae and fleas are available for indoor use. Repeat these treatments at 10-14 day intervals to ensure you have eliminated the fleas. Once a flea feeds on a pet and lays eggs, the cycle repeats itself, unless your pet is being treated by a veterinarian dispensed drug or chemical. If you receive up-to-date medication from your veterinarian, the cycle is broken. This happens when the medicine either interferes with the fleas' reproductive cycle or eliminates the fleas before they mature to reproduce.

It is absolutely necessary to treat all of your pets with the medication we dispense. Let us know if you have other pets at home - including those who show no symptoms of fleas.

ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE CAN BE ANSWERED BY CALLING OUR OFFICE.
PRACTICE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE, SURGERY AND DENTISTRY