

## Fleas:



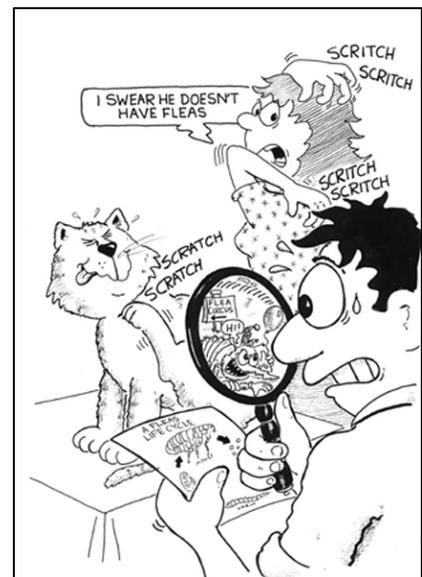
### *Where does my dog/cat get fleas?*

The most common flea found on cats and dogs is the cat flea (*Ctenocephalides felis*). The most important source of cat fleas is newly emerged adult fleas from pupae in your house. Adult fleas live and feed on our pets but the female flea lays eggs, which fall off into the environment. Under favorable conditions, these eggs develop first into larvae and then into pupae. The pupae contain adult fleas that lie in wait for a suitable animal host. Modern carpeted centrally-heated homes provide ideal conditions for the year round development of fleas. The highest numbers of flea eggs, larvae and pupae will be found in areas of the house where pets spend the most time such as their beds, furniture and so forth. Even though fleas may be in your house, you probably won't see them; the eggs are too small to see without magnification and the larvae, which are just visible, migrate deep down into carpets, furniture or cracks in floors away from the light.

### *What effect do fleas have on my pet?*

Many dogs/cats live with fleas but show minimal signs. The following problems can occur:

- Some develop an allergy to flea bites. If these pets are bitten by fleas they groom or scratch excessively and develop skin disease.
- Adult fleas live on animals and feed on blood. In puppies/kittens and debilitated animals this may cause anemia and transmit disease.
- The flea acts as the intermediate host for the tapeworm (*Dipylidium caninum*). Tapeworm eggs, which are shed within tapeworm segments in dog or cat feces, are eaten by flea larvae that develop into infected fleas. Dogs and cats become infested by eating infected fleas during grooming. Any animal with fleas can also have a tapeworm infestation.

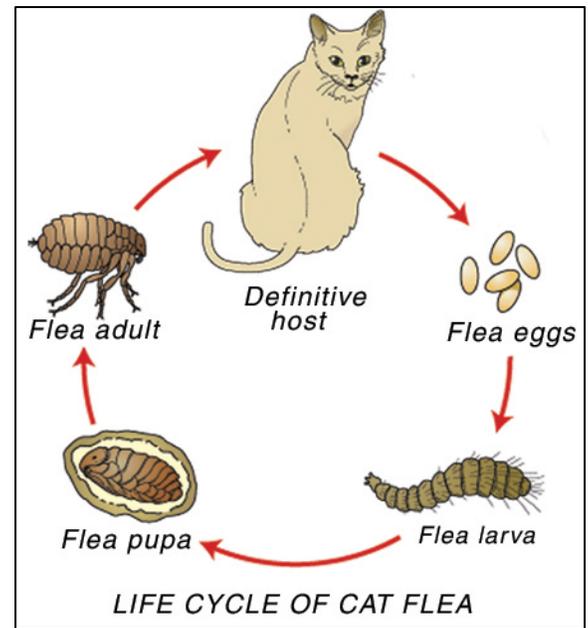


### ***How can I get rid of fleas on my pet?***

This can be a demanding task and requires a three pronged approach. Fleas need to be eliminated from your pet, from any other cats and dogs in your environment, and from your home. Even this rigorous approach may not give 100% control as there are other sources of fleas that are not amenable to your control such as other people's pets, wild animals and infested environments which your pet may come into contact with outside your house.

### ***What products are available to treat my pet?***

Here are the flea products we carry and recommend:



- **Frontline** – Frontline is applied between the shoulder blades on dogs and on the base of the skull on cats. The reason Frontline is applied at these locations is to prevent ingestion. Frontline will kill the fleas and ticks on your pet within 24 hours, and will repel them for up to one month. It can, however, be safely applied every 3 weeks, in the case of bad infestations. This product spreads over the pet's skin and into the hair follicles. It transmits a neurotoxin specific to fleas and ticks, and they die quickly upon contact. Your pet will be like a flea magnet as it travels through your home and, eventually, your flea population will be decimated. If the infestation is very serious, this process might take a couple of months coupled with treatment of your environment (in the next section). The product can be applied every three weeks, if warranted, until the desired results have been realized. We recommend the use of Frontline year-round.
- **Capstar** – Capstar is a pill that is very effective in killing fleas; however, it does not offer any additional repellent. Capstar kills all fleas on an animal within 30 minutes, but it only works for 24 hours. Capstar is best used in conjunction with Frontline in the case of bad infestations.
- **Revolution** – Revolution, like Frontline, is applied topically once a month. For cats, Revolution contains a heartworm prevention, and kills roundworms, hookworms, and ear mites. For dogs, Revolution takes care of fleas, heartworm prevention, and ear mites. Revolution is not labeled for roundworm or hookworm control in dogs.

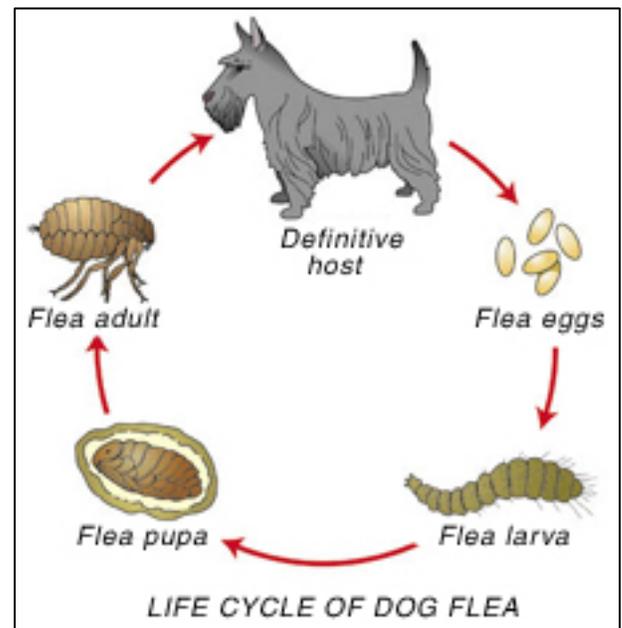
### ***How can I treat my home environment?***

Your pet's bedding should be washed weekly in hot water or replaced. Thorough vacuuming and cleaning of your carpets, floors and soft furnishings weekly can remove a large number of flea eggs, larvae and pupae that are present in your home. You will need to throw away the vacuum bag to prevent eggs and larvae from developing inside the vacuum cleaner.

For the safety of you, your pet, and your family (particularly children), we do not recommend the use of insecticides in your home in the form of flea bombs or flea sprays for your pet or for carpets. All of these products leave a film of poison all over your home or pet for everyone to breathe in, for children to play in, touch, and possibly ingest. Flea shampoos do nothing but kill the fleas that are on the pet at that time and don't eliminate fleas from the environment which is absolutely key. See the section above about Frontline and how it works.

### ***I have not seen any fleas on my pet. Why has my veterinarian advised flea control?***

Fleas are easy to find if a dog or cat is heavily infested. If fleas are present in smaller numbers, it can be harder to see them and fleas move fast! Try looking on the stomach, around the tail base and around the neck. Sometimes adult fleas cannot be found but "flea dirt" can be seen. This is fecal matter from the flea that contains partially digested blood and is a good indicator of the presence of fleas. Flea dirt is seen as small black specks or coiled structures; when placed on damp white tissue, they dissolve leaving a reddish brown blood color. Flea dirt may be found in bedding even when they cannot be found on the animal. In cats that develop an allergy to fleas one of the symptoms is excessive grooming. Cats are very efficient at removing debris from their coat's using their tongues and may succeed in removing all evidence of flea infestation i.e. adult fleas and flea dirt. Again, here is an opportunity for tapeworm infestation.



One of the most common causes of canine and feline allergic skin disease is flea allergy. To investigate this possibility your veterinarian may advise rigorous flea control even though no fleas can be found. If your pet's skin problem improves with flea control then it suggests that flea allergy is involved.

*Flea information is based on material written by Ernest E. Ward Jr., DVM.*

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