

FLEA INFORMATION

Fleas are likely to be present in all environments that dogs and cats frequent, even during the winter months.

Ctenocephalides felis is the most common flea found to bite dogs and cats. Other types of fleas exist but are much less common. This flea can also be found on foxes, ferrets, coyotes, opossums, and several rodent species. Any pet with allergies, sensitive skin or disease affecting the skin is likely to be affected when a flea bites them, and the general skin condition may worsen. The life cycle (the time from being laid as an egg to becoming an adult flea) can vary from 13 days to 2 years. During this lifetime, a single flea which enters the household can produce 20-50 eggs per day and as many as 2000 total eggs which hatch into new fleas.

Diligent flea control is necessary in all veterinary dermatology patients and their house-mates. If a pet has allergic skin disease or is suspected of being flea allergic, then exceptionally diligent control methods need to be put into place. Remember that if a pet has allergies, an incident of flea bites can result in discomfort/itching that lasts up to 7 days and also lead to secondary infections that may persist for months. More than 50% of atopic dogs also have flea allergy. If fleas or flea 'dirt' (flea feces) are found then you know that they are there, however fleas are usually not found on flea allergic pets – fleas do not survive well on flea allergic pets (but the itching from a bite continues for many days).

Flea control products:

Remember that your veterinarian can not make specific recommendations for a product that they are not familiar with. There are hundreds of products available on the market. Many of these products have not been tested and there may be little actual information available. Veterinary clinic staff can not give specific recommendations for use of products without seeing the product itself. After a product has been evaluated, the use of the product can be discussed. The best approach for flea control is to develop a control program with qualified veterinary staff and use products that are available from your veterinarian's clinic. The clinic will be familiar with products being used and will then be able to appropriately respond to problems or questions if they should arise. Combinations of products are often used because fleas have begun to show resistance to some products.

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Basic flea control for the ENVIRONMENT:

- 1) Treating the indoor environment
 - a. Indoors appropriately applied sprays or powders may be used. Be sure to treat all areas where the pets may go. If there is uncertainty or even infrequent visits by the pet to a particular area, treat it!
- 2) Treating the outdoor environment. This will need to be tailored to your specific environment
 - a. Shady areas (including areas under decks). Fleas prefer shady areas and are likely to be present there.
 - b. Areas where organic matter is present (wood piles, wood chips, etc)
 - c. Sunny areas (grass, concrete, etc)
 - d. Communal areas, doggie day care or the 'great outdoors': Many outdoor areas can be extremely difficult or impossible to treat, so options include restricting pet access to these areas. Topical flea control products may be applied prior to visiting these areas to achieve maximal protection. If a pet is highly flea allergic, visits to these areas should be restricted.

Basic flea control for the PET:

- 1) Topical products: these are sprayed on or applied to the skin and gradually spread to cover the entire body. These are usually washed off/diluted down when medicated shampoo is used, and must then be reapplied.
 - a. Sprays usually contain repellent products such as pyrethrins and permethrins. These should always be used as directed on the label. Be sure that cats are not exposed to products that may be harmful to them (even if that product is applied to a dog in the household)
 - b. Remember that products containing DEET are extremely toxic to pets and should never be used.
 - c. Advantage; Advantix
 - d. Frontline; Frontline Plus
 - e. Vectra
 - f. Others: little or no data available for most OTC products
 - g. Flea shampoos and flea collars are of limited benefit for pets with dermatitis. Flea dips are less frequently used since safer more effective products have been developed.
- 2) Systemic products
 - a. These are products that enter into the body and then migrate out to the skin surface
 - b. Program
 - c. Capstar
 - d. Promeris
 - e. Revolution
 - f. Comfortis
- 3) For allergic pets, the type of treatment used may vary throughout the year.

FLEA CONTROL PLAN:

For your pet:

Suggestions for other household pets (these must be approved by the veterinarian who regularly examines/manages these pets. We can not make recommendations for a pet that we have not seen.):

Indoors:

Outdoors:

Special Circumstances (such as camping, visit to kennel, relative, groomer, playgroup, doggie-daycare, etc):