

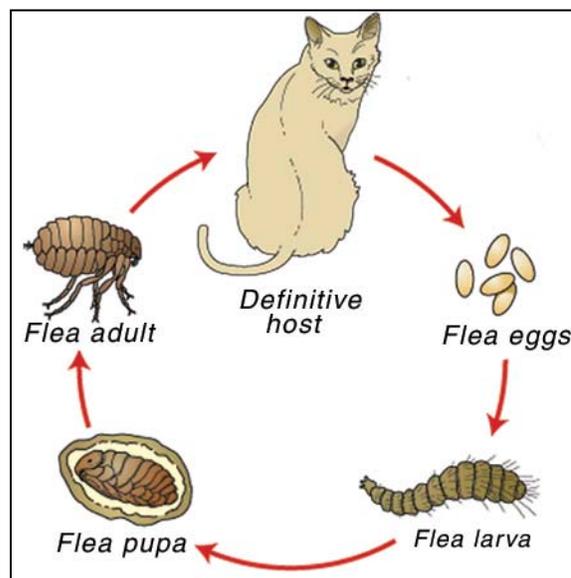
Fleas

Fleas! Pesky little critters that can be difficult to get rid of! Keep reading to find out why and discover what can be done about them.

Fleas are insects and follow a life cycle much like that of a butterfly. The adult fleas live on the pets. They lay eggs that fall off the pet into the house. The eggs hatch into caterpillar-like larvae which crawl around in cracks and crevices eating dead skin cells and flea dirt. Eventually these form a cocoon (pupa) like a butterfly and then hatch out into adults which jump onto the pet to feed.

For every flea you find on your pet there are hundreds of eggs, larvae and cocoons in the environment

Also, they can stay dormant in those cocoons for up to one year and there is nothing that will kill them when they are in that stage of their life cycle. This is why they are so hard to get rid of once you have an infestation. Fleas like hot, humid weather so they tend to go dormant over the winter when the house is cooler and drier. That is why we tend to see fleas mostly in the summer and fall and not through the winter and early spring.



To be effective: a flea treatment regime must be used for a minimum of one year and every animal in the house must be treated. If lifestyle predisposes your pets to picking up fleas on a regular basis (ie: they are around a lot of strange animals or areas where strange animals roam): you may want to leave them on flea prevention all the time. Even the squirrels in your backyard can carry fleas.

There are many options for flea treatment and we would be happy to recommend an effective product that fits your lifestyle and your budget. Please do not hesitate to ask us!

With modern, effective flea products, cleaning the home environment is not strictly necessary to resolve a flea infestation as long as you treat your pets for long enough. However, a good cleaning can knock the numbers down faster. To clean the environment effectively, please follow the following steps.



- Wash everything that you can. No flea will survive a trip through the washer and dryer, so wash and dry all of the bedding, couch-cushion covers, pillows etc that you can.
- Vacuum thoroughly. Flea larvae like to crawl where they are not going to get stepped on: under couch cushions, under furniture etc. Remove the couch cushions and vacuum under them. Vacuum under all furniture, whether you have carpeting or not. Vacuuming will physically remove many of the flea eggs, larvae and cocoons from the environment. Movement and Carbon dioxide stimulate fleas to hatch. The vacuum produces both of these and “tricks” the fleas into hatching. In this way vacuuming is far superior to sweeping. Make sure you spray some raid into the vacuum bag before you vacuum and empty the bag to an outdoor garbage bin as soon as you’re finished! Otherwise, any starving fleas hatching out in the vacuum bag will find you to be a tasty meal when you do change the vacuum bag: a most unpleasant experience!!
- Environmental sprays to kill fleas in the house can also help but never spray these on the pets! Most of these sprays kill adult fleas for 7 days. The better ones have something called an insect growth regulator in them that kills eggs and larvae for up to 6 months. If you choose to spray your house, choose a product with an insect growth regulator in it for this reason. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions exactly and pay attention to warnings that may be listed on the label. Many of these sprays are toxic to people and pets in large doses so use with caution and according to the label instructions. Again, spraying will help knock the numbers of fleas down faster but is not necessary to resolve the problem.

What about flea collars and topical products available in the pet-stores?

Many of these products may superficially seem the same as the prescription ones that we carry, but they are not. Just because they are applied the same way does not mean they have the same active ingredients! We only carry products that we have confidence in and we would be happy to recommend one for you. If you choose to use an over-the counter flea-control product, please assure yourself of its safety and efficacy. Be sure to read the packaging carefully! **Some over the counter flea products are toxic to cats and you can’t even use them on a dog that lives in the same house as a cat.** If you have any questions about the product or have any complaints about how effective it is you should



contact the manufacturer directly using the customer service information on the packaging.

Good Luck! If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us.

Illustration of flea life cycle courtesy of Lifelearn Inc.