

FLEAS AND THEIR CONTROL

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INTRODUCTION

By the time most owners discover fleas on their pet; their home is usually part of the problem. Controlling and eliminating fleas requires understanding that the flea life cycle has three working parts. Each part can be found wherever dogs like to sleep, play and spend time. The three part life cycle involves: eggs, larvae and pupae. Fleas live on pets and bite them to feed on their blood supply. When irritated by fleas, dogs begin to scratch causing some to become allergic to flea bites. Some will develop a skin condition called Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD).

LIFESTYLE

The ideal hatching places for fleas are: your home, other animals, sheds, parks, gardens and wooded areas. Adult fleas live on an animal and prefer to stay with one host.

When a dog scratches, shakes their coat or lies down this action scatters flea eggs and fleas from room to room. Fleas and their eggs have few preferences. Most prefer to hatch in your carpets, bed, sofas etc. Eggs can hatch into larvae in as little as one day. The larvae move away from light and prefer deep carpets, cracks in flooring and places that are quiet. These areas allow them to spin themselves a cocoon and become a pupa which is a protective shell.

New adults in their protective cocoons lie in wait for their victims. They can go without food for months. People and pets walking near flea pupae provide a stimulus which comes from body heat and exhaled breath. These are signals to the waiting flea to hatch and jump on the victim. According to the makers of FRONTLINE, a female can lay up to 50 eggs per day and over 2,000 in her lifetime.

CONTROL

Control can become a nightmare unless owners develop a systematic plan. There are four recognized ways to control and kill flea infestations:

1. Kill adults first before they find a home on your dog.
2. Kill new adults already on your dog.
3. Use products developed that prevent further infestation and those that inhibit the hatching of flea eggs.
4. Clear your home and pet environment of flea eggs, larvae and pupae that are already hiding. This is best done with products designed to control and kill them.

YOUR PLAN

A practical approach to the control and eradication of fleas involves five steps.

1. Regularly vacuum your house. Put a tablespoon of sevin dust on the floor and vacuum it up. This product will kill fleas that hatch in the warm, dark nursery like environment of a vacuum cleaner.
2. Apply a commercial product to your dog that kills fleas and flea eggs.
3. Regularity wash your pets bedding to remove the eggs, larvae and pupae.
- 4 Increase the temperature and humidity of your home to encourage the pupae to hatch into adult fleas. These newly arriving fleas will be killed when they jump on your pet that has been treated with a commercial product for fleas.
- 5 Allow your treated pet to roam in all their usual places so that they will attract newly hatched fleas that are then killed on your pet.

Remember that flea pupae are protected by their cocoons. All pupas will have to hatch and be killed as adult fleas. It can take up to 3 – 4 months to kill all the fleas emerging from the pupae that are already in those dark warm places in your carpets, floors, kennels etc.