



FLEA FACTS & INFORMATION

Flea Infestations are the most common parasite problem of dogs and cats in our area. It is estimated that American pet owners spend over \$500 million each year on flea products; most of which do not work!

The only treatments that have been effective at preventing and controlling fleas have been **topical or oral monthly preventives**. We have several that we can provide to you with proven results. If your pet already has fleas, these preventives can help to eventually eradicate the infestation, but this will still require the fleas to get onto your pet, potentially biting several times. This method will also take several months. To speed the elimination of the infestation and help prevent your pet from the risk of flea allergy and tapeworm infection, we also recommend **treating your house**. Over-the-counter foggers work very well and may be used in conjunction with home sprays. Local exterminators will also have experience in dealing with flea infestations.

Here are some facts you should know:

1. Flea eggs are white and about the size of a grain of sand. The eggs are laid while the flea is on the pet and easily roll off the fur into the environment. Eggs usually hatch in 1-10 days, depending on the temperature and humidity. Once the eggs hatch, the larvae move deeper into the carpet to get away from light and searching for food. Temperatures below 65° and relative humidity below 70% slow down growth of the flea. When the larva is mature, it produces a silk-like cocoon. Because the cocoon is sticky, it quickly becomes coated with debris from the environment that helps camouflage it. This stage can last 9-174 days. Adult fleas emerge from the cocoon when stimulated by heat, vibrations, and exhaled carbon dioxide. The entire life cycle can be completed in as little as 12-14 days, or as long as 140 days. Under average conditions, the entire life cycle takes 3-4 weeks.
2. Adult fleas are attracted to house pets by the warmth of the pet's body, movement, changes in light intensity, and exhaled carbon dioxide. Fleas have tremendously powerful back legs, which they use for jumping on the pet. It is estimated that if we have the power in our legs as has the flea, we could jump over the Empire State Building. It is reported that fleas can jump as high as 13 feet.
3. It is now known that the adult flea species that attacks dogs and cats spends its ENTIRE Adult Life on the pet. Once the adult flea begins to feed on the pet, it must have almost CONSTANT ACCESS to the blood of the pet for it to survive. Adult fleas cannot live off the pet more than 3-4 days without a blood meal.
4. Egg production begins within 48 hours of the first blood meal, reaches a peak of 40-50 eggs per day and can last well over 100 days. Female fleas can produce over 2000 eggs during their life. This is equivalent to producing their body weight in eggs every day of their life. While only a fraction of these eggs will eventually develop to adults in the natural environment, this high rate of reproduction ensures that there will ALWAYS be fleas!
5. New adult fleas must have a blood meal within 2-3 weeks after hatching. The higher the temperature and lower the humidity, the quicker the fleas will die.
6. It is common for people to be attacked by fleas after returning from vacation or being away from home for several days. This is often due to the increased temperature that occurs when the air conditioning is turned back providing a better optimum temperature and humidity (in our area) for fleas to mature.
7. Fleas consume 15 times their body weight with every blood meal. An infestation of 220 female fleas could consume 10% of a 1 pound kitten's blood volume in one day. The majority of blood consumed is passed out as partially digested feces ("Flea Dirt") that serves as essential food for flea larvae in the carpets and other areas.

8. Flea Baths will only kill the fleas currently on your pet. If your pet has fleas, it is very likely that they have already laid eggs inside your home.

9. Fleas are a host for tapeworm and carry the eggs inside of them. When pets chew and groom themselves when fleas are present, they ingest the eggs and contract tapeworm. Tapeworms do not shed eggs like other intestinal worms and they are rarely found on regular stools checks. Therefore, tapeworm treatment (pills or injection) is always recommended when fleas are present.

