



Fleas

Inspection, Treatment, & Prevention

Inspection

Although the primary host for fleas is the animal, dog or cat, they prefer, less than 10% of the population inhabits their host. The rest of the eggs, larvae and pupae are in the bedding, carpets or furniture where the pet spends its time. You can look at your pet for signs of fleas around its neck, armpits and groin. In the home you can put a sheet of white paper under the pet while combing or walk heavily near the paper or around these area while wearing tall, white socks. The fleas are about the size of a ball point pen tip and are flat and without wings.

You may also find flea dirt which, when wet, turns red. This is actually flea feces from blood meals. Flea eggs are 3-5mm and white, semi-transparent. The larvae will burrow into bedding or carpet and will spin a pupae that included debris to help camouflage itself. Temperatures above 95 degrees F or relative humidity below 45-50% will kill fleas at all stages of growth.



Treatment



There are three primary treatment that must be done to help eliminate fleas on the pet and in the home.

Treat the Pet— The best treatment is to shampoo the pet with a product that is for flea treatment and to carefully follow label directions. There are also Flea Drops that can be applied similar to prevention products and there are Flea Sprays.

Treat the Home— Removing bedding and wash or throw out. Wash or steam treat carpets and furniture. And vacuum the entire house every day for 2 weeks.

Apply Insecticides— Use Flea Sprays or Dusts that contain both insecticides and growth inhibitors that help control all stages of development. Remember to use only as directed. Foggers and Bombs are only meant to be used in rooms empty of furniture and boxes.

Humans are not the meal of choice for fleas but, if there is a large infestation, the newly hatched adults will jump on whatever is passing by. Once on a pet they will not move to another host. There is a small chance of being infected with the plague or getting a tapeworm if living in the southwest of gulf coast regions. Otherwise injuries from flea bites are caused by scratching the bite and opening up the skin, allowing bacteria to infect the wound. Treat bites with lotions and antihistamines that are labeled for use on flea bites.

Prevention

The most important component and easiest treatment is prevention. Drops for prevention will last 1 to 3 months and are most important during warm and humid times and on animals that go outside. The treatment usually prevents ticks as well but, at around \$30 per month, the cost can be burdensome for people with low incomes. Yet compared to the cost and work of getting rid of fleas, it is more tolerable and is just one of the responsibilities we take on as pet owners. Some of the products are Fipronil (Frontline), Selamectin (Revolution), Lufenuron (Program), and Nitenpyram (Capstar). Consult your veterinarian for the product they recommend for your pet and follow label directions.



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