



**Good Friends
Animal
Hospital**

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Fleas

Fleas and summertime often go hand in hand. Although, they can be extremely frustrating and irritating to deal with, they can be controlled. By understanding the life cycle of the flea, it helps us develop appropriate strategies to fight them successfully.

Adult fleas live on our pets and will not leave unless forced to. They feed on blood and lay eggs on our pets. The eggs are not sticky so they easily fall off into the environment whether it is our house or yard. Larvae hatch from the eggs. The larvae do not like light so they will crawl under things to get away. The larvae are also capable of curling around carpet fibers so they are not picked up easily when you vacuum.

The larvae then form a cocoon and become pupae. The cocoon is resistant to all known chemicals and this stage cannot be killed by anything available at this time. The pupae hatch in response to vibrations and carbon dioxide and become adult fleas. If you go away for a 3 month vacation the pupae will stay safely in their cocoons until you return and walk into the house breathing out carbon dioxide. That will stimulate the fleas to hatch and attack! Vacuuming will help to stimulate the pupae to hatch and you can vacuum more of them up.

If you see fleas on your pet, you can be sure that they are also in your house unless your pet is strictly outdoors. Only about 5% of the flea population is in the adult stage, so 95% of them are as eggs, larvae and pupae in your house. It is important to treat all pets in a house and not just the ones that you see fleas on or that go outside.

When treating your pet for fleas, be sure to read labels carefully. Do not use dog products on cats because they could be toxic. The monthly topical products from your veterinarian are generally the most effective. Continue treating for fleas until we've had 2 heavy frosts which will kill all of them outside. That generally means into December. Flea numbers build up throughout the summer and the population is heaviest in fall. If you stop treatment too early, you'll continue to have problems all winter long.

Fleas are a nuisance but also a health threat. Too many fleas can cause anemia on a small animal. Sadly, we've had a case of a cat that died due to profound anemia from fleas. Fleas also carry tapeworms which your pet can get and they can cause allergic reactions in some pets. Play it safe and treat your pets regularly.