

A flea is no bigger than a pinhead, yet they are the most common cause of allergic skin disease in dogs and cats.

How can you tell if your pet has fleas?

This is a question we as a veterinary practice get asked quite frequently, only the answer is not as straightforward as you might imagine. Fleas are only the size of a pinhead, so spotting them in a furry coat is very difficult. Not only is their size a problem, but also their ability to move and jump. So you are lucky (or unlucky!) if you spot them. Many fleas on a coat are easier to spot than the odd few. The next best thing to look for instead of the flea is flea droppings or flea dirt. These are small black specks in the coat, often confused with soil. If you see these specks and are unsure if they are "flea dirt", then a very simple test is to get a piece of tissue or kitchen roll, brush on some of these black specks and moisten the tissue with water. If the specks leave a rusty coloured smear, they are "flea dirt" (all fleas eat is blood, so all they pass is blood).

The flea life cycle

The flea life cycle may take as little as two to three weeks if the climate is right.

- **Adult Flea** - feeds off your pet and begins to lay eggs after one to two days.
- **Eggs** - a single flea may lay up to 2,000 eggs in her lifespan.
- **Larvae** - eggs hatch and the larvae bury themselves away from light in carpets, rugs etc.
- **Pupae** - the larvae spin a cocoon and 'pupate', just waiting for the right circumstances in which to hatch.

... and then the cycle happens all over again.

So, how can you control fleas?

There are many different products available now to treat your pet. These vary in price, duration of action and methods of application.

These programmes are designed to eradicate fleas and prevent reinfestation. It is important to treat both your pet's environment and **all** the animals in the household. For every flea you see on your pet, there are 100 in the carpet. Even if your pets are not allowed the complete run of the house, you still need to treat everywhere as flea eggs can be transported on your clothes or shoes.

1. Treat Pet:

Apply a suitable flea control product, according to the manufacturer's recommendations, to **all** dogs and cats in the household. Suitable products for dogs and cats include:

- Non-aerosol sprays
- Spot-on preparations
- Tablets

These treat the fleas directly. These products work differently and are priced differently. Please make an appointment for a free consultation with our clinic nurse to go through all the products and discuss which will suit your pet's lifestyle. Alternatively, seek advice from our small animal team.



2. Treat Environment:

- Apply a product that makes the fleas sterile and therefore unable to reproduce. Suitable products include:
 - Spot-on preparations
 - Injections
 - Tablets
- Vacuum the entire property, paying particular attention to your pet's sleeping areas, and also vacuum along skirting boards, radiators and any crevices.
- Dispose of the contents of the vacuum collecting bag to prevent development of flea eggs and larvae.
- Apply our recommended spray to the entire property as directed and do not vacuum for seven days to allow the spray to be effective. This will need to be repeated according to the manufacturer's recommendations.



Certain 'spot on' flea treatments are now available that, when applied to your pet's skin, treat both animal and environment. In some cases this may negate the need to spray the home.

NB: In warm environments, treatment may have to be continued **all year round**. If your pet has fleas, it will also need to be wormed regularly against tapeworms.

Your veterinary practice recommends the following products for your pet:



March 2010



Quick Reference Guide



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