

Park Place Veterinary Hospital

FLEAS! 🐾 FLEAS! 🐾 FLEAS! 🐾 FLEAS! 🐾 FLEAS!

Fleas have a complex, 4-stage life cycle. Control of fleas on your pet and in your home must address all stages of this life cycle to stop the problem of flea infestation.

FLEA CONTROL ON YOUR PET

Following package directions is essential when using over the counter products and medications. Only buy products that are labeled for use on the age ,weight and species you will be using them on (dog, cat, etc.). Cats in particular are very sensitive to drugs and chemicals – be sure to read all labels carefully!

The best way to control fleas on your pet is with one of the “spot-on” treatments. The medication is applied to the skin between your pet’s shoulder blades. The medication soaks into the oil layer of the skin and spreads out to kill fleas on all parts of your pet. Most are effective for 1 month. Bathing and swimming should be avoided for 12 hours prior and 24 hours after application, however these activities will not wash off the product after this time. The Doctors at PPVH recommend that you use a good quality product, such as Advantage, Frontline or Vectra. **Use caution**the topical spot-on products, flea powders, sprays or collars that are available at pet supply stores do not give reliable results.

For best flea control:

- 🐾 Treat ALL pets in the household. Use the correct product and dose for each pet.
- 🐾 The spot-on product should be applied for at least two consecutive months if fleas have been found on your pet.
- 🐾 Since fleas can reproduce indoors year-round, consider using preventative flea control on your pet, and be sure to treat all areas of your pet’s environment.

FLEA CONTROL IN YOUR HOME, CAR AND YARD

Immature fleas (eggs, larvae and pupae) are hard to see, but may be found anywhere your infested pet has been! And this includes your car if your pet rides with you! They may thrive in very large numbers in many areas of your home, such as carpets, beddings and cracks in the floor. Only about 10% of the flea populations (mainly the adults) are on your pet. The flea eggs, larvae, pupae and the few adults that reside in the carpeting, bedding and living areas in your home make up the remaining 90% of the flea population. Neglecting this population of fleas will ensure that the flea problem will continue and worsen over time.

To treat your home:

- 🐾 Vacuum frequently! Daily vacuuming is very important for flea eradication. This will pick up (and get rid of) adults, eggs, larvae and pupae before they develop. Emptying the bag frequently is also important; otherwise the fleas will hatch, develop, and leave the vacuum to re-infest your living quarters...get the used bag out of your home!
- 🐾 Wash all bedding, clothing and removable furniture covers.
- 🐾 Spray with a premise flea spray which kills adult fleas on the furniture, carpet and flooring, and persists in the environment to kill adult fleas and prohibit eggs from hatching. We recommend Siphotrol brand flea spray. Flea “bombs” or foggers are not as effective as a spray, since they just

shoot up in the air and settle down onto flat surfaces, not reaching under tables, counters or furniture.

- 🐾 If your pet rides in your car, don't forget to vacuum your car and use a premise spray.
- 🐾 Prevent your pet from frequenting damp and shady areas under your deck, beneath staircases and in other outdoor areas of your property.

FREQUENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: *My cats are inside only! How did they get fleas?*

A: Fleas can hitch hike into your home on your pant legs if you have been someplace where adult fleas are living, or if another animal visits.

Q: *When can I stop using flea prevention on my pet?*

A: While fleas are at their worst during the hot, humid months of late summer and early fall, fleas can live year-round inside your home.

Q: *I just applied a 30-day preventative on my pet 2 weeks ago, so why am I seeing adult fleas already?*

A: This is a sign that there are still adult fleas living in your pet's environment and they are jumping onto your pet. Once they take a blood meal these fleas will be killed, but you also need to treat your home.

Q: *Why does my pet keeps getting tapeworms, even though I use the prescribed worming medication?*

A: Fleas are a primary host for tapeworms and as long as your pet has fleas, he or she will keep getting re-infested by tapeworms.

LIFE CYCLE OF THE FLEA

🐾 **ADULT:** The adult flea is very flat side to side. There are hair-like bristles on the flea body and legs to aid in their navigation through pet hair. Fleas have 3 pairs of legs, the hindmost pair designed for jumping. Fleas are well known for their jumping abilities. Adult fleas prefer to live on the animal and their diet consists of blood meals courtesy of the host animal. The female flea lays white, roundish eggs. The adult female flea has a breeding life of 100 days and can lay up to 50 eggs per day! That's a potential of thousands of eggs from each female flea! And a single flea can bite a pet over 400 times in one day!

🐾 **EGG:** The eggs are not sticky (like some parasites) and they usually fall off of the animal into the carpet, bedding, floorboards and soil. When the flea egg hatches varies – anywhere from 2 days to a few weeks, depending on environmental conditions. The larva emerges from the egg.

🐾 **LARVA:** Larvae are about ¼ inch long, and semi-transparent white. They have small hairs along their body and actively move. They eat the feces of adult fleas (which is mostly dried blood) and other organic debris found in the carpet, bedding and soil. Depending on the amount of food present and the environmental conditions, the larval stage lasts about 5 to 18 days (longer in some cases). Then the larva spins into a cocoon and pupates.

🐾 **PUPA:** The pupa is the last stage before the adult. The adult flea can emerge from the cocoon as early as 3 to 5 days, or it can stay in the cocoon for a year or more, waiting for the right environmental conditions such as warm temperatures and high humidity. This brings us back to the adult flea