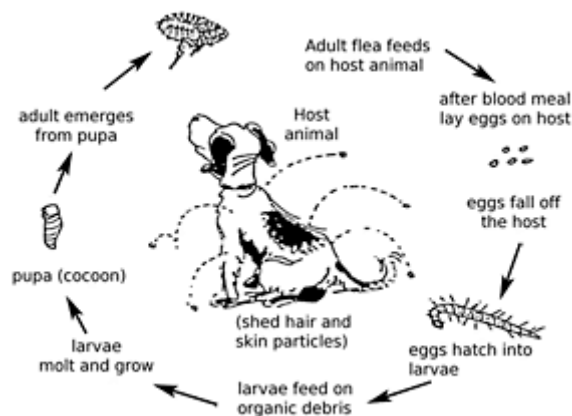


## FLEA BIOLOGY & CONTROL

Understanding the life cycle of the flea is crucial to effective flea control. It is very important to treat the environment in which your pets are living as well as your dogs and cats. The stages of the flea life cycle are egg, larva, pupa and adult. Fleas spend most of their time living in the environment not on your pets. The adult female flea is the flea that feeds on your pet because she needs a high protein meal before she lays eggs. Flea eggs and larvae are found amongst the hair and skin that your pet naturally sheds. This means that flea eggs and larvae will be found wherever your pet sleeps and spends most of its time.



Dogs and cats share fleas, so **all** dogs and cats in the household and regular pet visitors need to be treated for fleas at the same time.

### Eggs, Larvae & Pupae:

Environmental flea control strategies as described e.g. vacuuming, washing & ants.

Insecticidal products e.g. Advantage, Advantix (not cats), Comfortis tablets, Frontline Plus or Permethrin (not cats) to kill adult fleas before they breed.

### Adult Fleas:

Environmental flea control strategies as described e.g. vacuuming and washing

Topical products as described e.g. soap free shampoo, flea comb or lemon skin tonic

Natural diet – fresh home-made food containing a balance of ingredients

If necessary, chemical flea products e.g. Advantage, Advantix (dogs only NOT cats), Comfortis tablets, Frontline or permethrin spray/rinse e.g. Permethrin (dogs only, NOT cats).

**Flea control must be done all year round ie not just the summer!**

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### SUMMARY OF NATURAL FLEA CONTROL

- Consider restricting your pets' access to areas within your home to make cleaning more manageable
- Steam clean your carpets and rugs at the beginning of the flea season to kill flea eggs eg Spring
- Vacuum and clean **all** floors, skirting boards, furniture and bedding that your pets have access to, thoroughly at least once a week to remove flea eggs, larvae and pupae, especially where your pets sleep. Dispose of the contents of the vacuum as soon as possible to prevent re-infestation
- Wash your pet's bedding in hot soapy water at least once a week and dry in the sun or on maximum heat. You can also put the bedding out over a frosty night or in the freezer as freezing and defrosting kills flea eggs and larvae
- Bathe your pet with natural flea-control soap free shampoo and leave on for 10 minutes. This will kill fleas on your pet at the time of bathing but will not have a residual effect, so new fleas are unaffected.
- Use a flea comb on your pet to trap and kill fleas every day or week depending on the time of year and level of infestation. You can kill the fleas in hot soapy water. A few drops of diluted essential oils may be put on the flea comb e.g. lavender, rosemary or cedar
- **Neat tea tree or pennyroyal oil can be fatally toxic to cats and dogs if ingested whilst grooming**
- Mow the lawn regularly
- Encourage ants/don't discourage them as they eat flea larvae and eggs
- Apply agricultural lime on grassy or moist areas to dry out the fleas
- Lemon skin tonic e.g. thinly slice a whole lemon including the peel; add to 500ml of near-boiling water and infuse overnight; sponge the solution onto your pet's skin and leave to dry. This can be used daily
- Feed a more natural diet that includes fresh or dried garlic and nutritional yeast and raw meaty bones. Some cats and dogs don't tolerate yeast products or garlic. You may ask us for information on diets.
- If this approach hasn't worked then treat your carpets with anti-flea mineral salts e.g. sodium polyborate or other boron based compounds or sprinkle natural unrefined diatomaceous earth (not DE for swimming pool filters) along walls, under furniture, in hard to get to places and on carpets. Wear a mask and don't use if respiratory conditions are a problem in the household.
- A spray or powder containing natural pyrethrins or synthetic pyrethroids are the least toxic of the insecticides used on dogs. **Do not use in cats as they can be fatally toxic to cats.**
- If you use a chemical spot-on flea product, then only use soap-free shampoo and don't wash your pet more than once a fortnight. Your pet must be dry for 48 hours before & after applying the product ie no swimming or washing. Many people need to use commercial products on their pets as part of their flea control program. Please ask us for more information on what may be suitable for your household.
- Please understand that there can be a time lag for up to 3 months for you to notice success if you don't treat the environment because the larvae and eggs already there have to develop and die.
- If you have a challenge keeping fleas under control, don't give up, please give us a call!

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