

The Ultimate Guide to Fleas:

Protecting Your Pet For Lifelong Health

Fleas are one of the most common external parasites seen in dogs and cats. They survive by feeding on the blood of animals. Although small, they can cause significant discomfort and health concerns for pets. Fleas commonly lead to itching, scratching, skin irritation, hair loss, and allergic skin reactions. In more severe cases, fleas can also transmit tapeworms and contribute to anemia, especially in young or small pets.

Fleas reproduce quickly and spend most of their life cycle in the environment, meaning they can easily spread throughout the home in carpets, bedding, and furniture. Even indoor pets can become exposed to fleas through contact with other animals or by fleas being brought inside on clothing or footwear.

Understanding what fleas are and how they affect pets is an important part of maintaining your pet's overall health and comfort.

THE FLEA LIFE CYCLE:

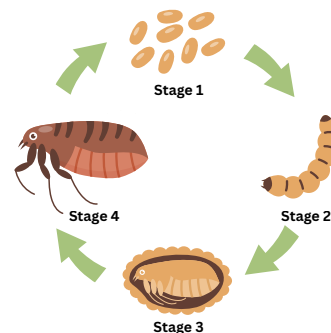
There are 4 life stages of a flea. A flea's full lifecycle can last from a couple weeks to several months depending on the environment they are in.

Stage 1 (Eggs): White eggs that are the size of a grain of sand are laid on your pet's fur and fall off into the environment including bedding, furniture and cracks.

Stage 2 (Larvae): Hatch from the eggs and hide in dark environments both inside your home and out, burrowing deep to avoid light. They feed on organic debris and flea dirt (which is digested blood excreted by adult fleas).

Stage 3 (Pupae): Cocoons that larvae spin to enter the pupal stage. This cocoon acts as armor and can be resistant to freezing, drying and insecticides, therefore they can lie dormant for months in this stage and will only emerge when they sense heat vibrations from a host (your pet).

Stage 4 (Adult Fleas): Develop from the pupae and live on your pet. Without a host the adult flea will die. They feed on the blood of your pet and the females will lay eggs shortly after feeding which restarts the cycle.



HOW YOUR PET CAN GET FLEAS:

- From other animals
- Outdoor spaces
- Homes with untreated pets
- Exposure to wildlife
- Shared living environments (apartments, multi-pet homes etc.)
- Owners can also bring fleas home if they have come in contact with them.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

Make sure to monitor your pet regularly for signs of fleas to help catch them early!

Monitor Your Pet For:

- Persistent scratching or chewing
- Redness, scabs and or hair loss
- Small black/dark red flecks
- Agitation and restlessness
- Signs of flea tapeworms which include small rice-like segments in the stool or on your pet's hind end, weight loss, gas, diarrhea, vomiting.

You can check your pet for fleas by parting their fur and looking closely in common areas where fleas like to hide including lower back/base of the tail, upper back, groin and armpits. Flea combing your pet also is a good way to check your pet. You can do this by taking a flea comb and running it through your pet's fur from their head down to their tail. Wipe any black flecks you pick up or see on a damp white paper towel; looking to see if the specks turn reddish-brown which would indicate that flea dirt is present.

FLEA PREVENTION:

Flea prevention is an important part of protecting your pet's health and comfort, regardless of whether they spend most of their time indoors or outdoors. Keeping your pet on consistent flea prevention not only protects them from discomfort and disease but also helps prevent infestations within your home and protects other pets they may encounter. This simple preventative measure plays an essential role in keeping your pet healthy, comfortable, and protected year-round and is one of the most important steps in treating fleas.

Always use a flea prevention recommended by your veterinarian as many over-the-counter products are less effective and may be unsafe for your pet.

FLEA TREATMENT FOR YOUR HOME:

If your pet has fleas, it's important to treat both your pet and your home environment. Adult fleas living on your pet make up only a small portion of the flea population - the majority are eggs, larvae, and pupae hiding in your home.

To help eliminate fleas from your home:

- Vacuum all carpets, rugs, furniture and base boards daily for the first couple weeks and dispose of the contents right after.
- Wash all bedding, blankets and washable fabric in hot water and dry on high heat.
- Steam clean furniture that cannot be put in the wash.
- Use flea sprays that are pet and furniture safe (consult your veterinarian first).

To help eliminate fleas from your yard:

- Maintain your yard regularly.
- Reduce shaded and humid areas.
- Wash areas or outdoor bedding/furniture where your pet likes to rest.
- Discourage wildlife from entering your yard.
- Close sandboxes when not in use.
- A pet safe treatment can also be considered if recommended by your veterinarian.

If you have any questions about what preventions and/or treatments are best for your dog or cat, feel free to reach out to us. We're here to help you make informed decisions and ensure your pet stays happy, healthy, and protected!

**Sincerely,
Veterinarians and Staff of Ilderton Pet Hospital**