

The wonderful world of fleas!

Guelph, ON

If you have ever had a dog or a cat, you have probably had an experience with fleas! Adult fleas are found on dogs, cats, and will occasionally bite a human who gets in their way. Aside from causing annoyance and irritation to both the pet and the human, fleas can be a source of disease transmission and can lead to tapeworm infection. Some pets also have an allergy to flea saliva and will develop a skin rash when bitten by a flea.

Adult fleas are the most common life stage that you will see on your dog or cat, in addition to flea “dirt”. Flea dirt looks like flecks of black pepper in your pet’s haircoat, usually seen at the base of the tail when you part the fur. Flea dirt is actually digested blood from the adult flea!



Fleas can be a source of disease transmission

Other life cycle stages include eggs, larvae, and cocoons (or pupae). The adult female lays eggs on the pet, who then acts essentially like a “salt-shaker”, dispensing eggs in the environment (your home or outdoors). The eggs drop off and eventually hatch into larvae. These may be in the carpet, between floorboards, in bedding, etc. The larvae then cocoon into a pupae. Pupae can stay dormant for many months and are stimulated to hatch when they sense a “meal” in the environment (i.e. your dog or cat). Things like expired carbon dioxide, heat, and vibrations will stimulate the cocoons to hatch, allowing the adult fleas to emerge. The fleas will then jump on your dog or cat to bite and feed, thus starting the cycle again.

The good news is there are products that can be used to help your dog or cat. These products work to kill adult fleas, as well as safely stopping the flea eggs and larvae in the environment from developing into adult fleas. These products can be used as a treatment, if a flea population has already been established in the home, as well as a preventative, to ensure that the flea population does not have a chance to establish in the home. Once a flea population has been established in a home, it can take up to three months of treating all pets in the household to eliminate the infestation. It is certainly better (and easier) to prevent than to treat! Talk to your veterinary team to find out how you can keep your pets, and home, flea-free!

For more information:

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