



# Treating and Controlling Fleas

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## DETECTION



Because fleas spend less than 10% of their lives on an animal they can be difficult to spot. You should check your pet regularly. Fleas are most commonly found in the areas of the neck, hindquarters, base of the tail, stomach, and groin. Sometimes the only evidence is the presence of tiny granules that resemble black pepper (flea dirt). Other signs of fleas are tapeworms, hot spots, restlessness, and scratching and chewing, especially on the rump. For pets allergic to fleabites, one bite is enough to cause intense skin irritation. However, some dogs and cats show no irritation even though fleas are present. If one dog or cat in the household has fleas, you can assume that all the animals in your home do.

## TREATMENTS

Fleas are difficult to eradicate. They live both inside and outside the home. Inside, fleas like carpets, furniture, and bedding, but they live on the wood, linoleum, and concrete floors. They can even live inside vacuum cleaner bags. Outside, fleas live everywhere: sidewalks, backyards, patios, and parks. Flea eggs take anywhere from the usual three to four weeks up to eight months to mature and they go through several stages: eggs, larvae, pupae, adults. In just thirty days, one female can produce more than 250,000 offspring at various stages of the life cycle. Unfortunately, not one treatment kills fleas at all of these stages, and no treatment kills the eggs. Successful flea control requires repeated and simultaneous treatment of the pet and the environment with a combination of approaches.

### A FLEA CONTROL PLAN:

1. Change or wash pet bedding at least every two weeks to remove flea larvae and eggs. It's not necessary to use a pesticide in the wash water since the eggs and larvae have no special clinging ability and will readily wash out of the bedding. Bedding can be dusted with flea powder several times a week to kill the adults as they emerge from the cocoons.
2. Place a few mothballs or the ends of flea collars in the vacuum cleaner bag to kill larvae and young adults.
3. Use a topical or oral preventative treatment. Be sure to administer the correct dosage according to the weight or size of the animal. These topical preventatives are species specific; never use canine treatments on cats as this could cause injury or sometimes death. Also, be sure to reapply the preventative as directed. If you have any questions, see your veterinarian.
4. If there are too many fleas in the environment, topical treatments will not control the flea population. Exterminate your home with flea bombs. Bomb all areas of the home including the basement and garage, and retreat in ten days. Note: Bombs sold by veterinary hospitals are more effective than those distributed by other outlets.

If, in spite all your efforts, you still have a flea problem, treat your yard with an insecticide designed to kill fleas.