

## **Information for You About Your Pet About: Fleas**

If you have received this, we have found fleas on your pet, and we are concerned about your pet's health. Here is information about fleas, their dangers, and what you can do to get rid of them.

**What Are Fleas?** Fleas are small brown wingless insects with flattened bodies. These blood-sucking insects cause irritation and distress to pets (hair loss, severe scratching, sores), and people. Severe infestations may lead to anemia from blood loss. Fleas can transmit *rickettsiosis* & *bartonellosis* to people. Fleas spread dog & cat tapeworm and carry several bacterial diseases. Flea bites cause skin allergies, rashes & sores on pets and owners.

Look for fleas on the hindquarters, base of tail, stomach and groin regions. You may only see tiny, black grains that look like pepper – this is digested blood ("*blood crumbs*"). Smudge it on white paper or add water to it - if it's red-brown, it means fleas.

**Flea Life Cycle:** After feasting on blood, fleas deposit eggs on your pet which spread everywhere your pet goes. Eggs hatch in 10 days and start to feed. A single pair may produce 20,000 fleas in 3-4 months! Older larvae hibernate in a cocoon for 1 week-1 year. This is why fleas are difficult to eliminate. A hungry adult flea emerges from the cocoon.

**Dealing with Fleas:** *Unless the yard and house are treated at the same time you treat all your pets, the infestation will reoccur. You must treat all animals in the household. Permethrins and Amitruz are toxic to cats, and can cause seizures. Do not use flea products for dogs on cats.*

**Shampoos:** Once rinsed off, they don't work as well. Pyrethrin shampoos are safe for kittens, and using some Dawn dishwashing liquid mixed with water is safe for kittens.

**Pills:** Prescription drugs usually given once/month pill or oral liquid. The product does not kill fleas, but prevents flea eggs from hatching. It is an easy way to stop the cycle but pets can pick up any fleas from pupa in the environment. Therefore, 4-7 months may pass before the flea-free state is reached. In order to stop the life cycle, ALL pets must be medicated. Capstar is a pill for pets over 4 weeks old that interferes with the fleas' nerve transmission and is shown to be effective at killing them.

**Spray on Applications:** Pyriproxifen: this is a new insect growth regulator that is extremely effective against flea eggs. It remains 100% effective for 150 days after a single spray application. It is an excellent option in cases when oral medications may be too expensive because of a multiple pet household or in situations where the oral medication is ineffective.

**Traditional Insecticides:** Several insecticides, or shampoos can be used along with oral preventatives. Shampoos are not as effective as sprays, dips or drip-ons because they have little to no residual activity. For cats, sprays or foaming mousses are useful. For dogs, sprays are recommended.

**Advanced Insecticides** such as Advantage® , Frontline® , Revolution® are marketed as a drip-on for both dogs and cats. Depending on the product, repeat applications should be applied monthly for flea control and prevention.

*Note: Cold weather reduces, but does not eliminate flea & tick infestations. Remember that fleas thrive in environments that are comfortable-like air conditioned/heated, dry homes.*