

Did You Know?

Fast Flea Facts

Fleas are tiny, wingless insects that feed on your pet as well as other animals. If you see evidence of fleas on your pet, it is essential to eradicate them as quickly as possible before the population grows.

Hungry fleas sometimes bite humans too, leaving small, red, itchy bumps most commonly observed on the wrists and ankles. Flea bites make some pets that are allergic to flea saliva so miserable that they bite and scratch themselves raw. This is called flea allergy dermatitis, or FAD for short.

How can I tell if my pet has fleas?

You may actually see the dark fleas, about the size of sesame seeds, scurrying about on the skin. Their favorite spots include the base of the ears and the rump. Look closely at sparsely haired places like the groin for telltale signs.

A more accurate way to diagnose fleas when live ones aren't observed is to part the fur in several places and look for tiny black specks about the size of poppy seeds. These specks are flea feces, composed of digested blood. If you're not sure whether you're looking at "flea dirt" or just plain dirt, place it on a damp piece of white tissue. After a minute or so, a small red spot or halo will appear if it's flea feces, since the blood rehydrates and diffuses into the tissue.

Getting rid of fleas on your pet, in your home, and in your environment entails killing them on your pet as well in the environment. For this, you may need a variety of products.



Be aware that fleas spread tapeworm infections.

A tapeworm is an intestinal parasite that can infect pets and humans. If an infected flea is swallowed, a tapeworm infection may develop. Make sure to have your pet checked if you suspect a tapeworm infection.

Treating your pets

The use of a topical flea product is essential to quickly kill fleas and stop them from biting your pet. You can purchase products such as Advantage, Advantix, and Seresto collars at either of our Clinic locations. Other products are also available from your veterinarian.

- Always treat all of the pets in the house because one untreated pet can prolong the infestation.
- Make sure to use your flea product year-round. In our community, there is no "flea season". We recommend Seresto collars for year-round treatment because they work continuously for up to eight months.
- During treatment, if you bathe your pet, make sure to use only an oatmeal-based shampoo.
- If your pet swims on a regular basis (four or more times per week) you may want to reapply Advantage more frequently for adequate flea control during the summer months. Advantage can be applied as frequently as weekly if it is needed.

Treating your environment

Flea larvae can live in your carpet for an extended period of time (up to nine months!) and hatch out quickly. You may not see them, but when the first warm weather hits, you will know that you have an infestation. Use these recommendations to treat your home.

- Premise sprays or powders can be applied throughout the house.
- Thorough vacuuming before home treatment is recommended. Discard the vacuum bag or thoroughly wash the sweeper canister once this job is finished.
- It is important to treat all areas where the pet has traveled since flea eggs and larvae may be present on the floor or furniture. A yard or kennel spray may be used to kill outside fleas.
- Sometimes it is best to consult a professional exterminator if the infestation in your house is severe.

Unfortunately, killing fleas on your pet is not enough to prevent the infestation from repeating itself. Flea eggs may survive for several weeks after live adults have been eliminated, so repeat treatments may be necessary.