

TO YOUR *Pet's* Health

THAT PESKY PEST... *the flea*

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Why does it seem that Fall is the worse time of year for fleas??

There may be several reasons for this. One of the biggest reasons is that fleas have had all spring and summer to reproduce. Did you know that a female flea can lay up to 40-50 eggs a day? This can add up to several hundred eggs from one female flea! If your pet has not been on a flea preventative, you often have a very large issue by the end of summer.

The most common flea that affects your pets, is the Cat Flea. The name is a little misleading, as this flea likes dogs just as much as cats. It will also live on a wide variety of other mammals including foxes, coyotes, opossum, and racoons. Luckily for us, they do not generally prefer humans, unless there is no other choice.

Once the adult flea emerges from its cocoon or pupa, it immediately starts looking for a host to feed on. A cat or dog is preferred. Surprisingly, the flea prefers to stay on its initial host. Only if the host has close to 200 or more fleas, will a flea try jumping to a less populated host. In other words, the fleas that you are finding on your pet, have just hatched from the environment, they have not jumped from one animal to the next.

The adult female flea starts laying eggs within 24 hours of its first meal. The female flea lays 40-50 eggs a

day, as well as continuously producing "flea dirt" or feces that the newly hatched larvae will feed on. The eggs and flea dirt drop off the animal and fall back into the environment, whether that is outdoors or in your house. You will find the highest concentration of eggs where the animal spends most of its time.

The eggs hatch in 2-3 days into larvae. The larvae mature in 5 to 10 days. During this time the larvae's main meal is the flea dirt that the adult fleas produce during their continuous blood meals on your pet.

The larvae then make a pupa, or cocoon, to protect them while they are developing into the adult flea. Although the flea can emerge in just 5 to 10 days, if it does not emerge it can survive in this pupa for up to 6 months.

While in their pupae, fleas are very resistant to temperature and humidity changes as well as a lot of the environmental insecticides that are used to treat an infestation. This is something to keep in mind, if it appears environmental treatments are failing.

Why use a flea preventative? If you have ever had to deal with a flea infestation in your home, you already know one of the major reasons. It is so much easier to prevent a flea infestation than to try to get rid of one!



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