

Protecting your cat during flea season

TIP: Forget Flea Collars

Along with the onset of warmer weather comes an explosive increase in the prevalence of **Ctenocephalides felis**, the cat flea. These high-jumping, minute creatures (they're about one-tenth of an inch long) thrive in a warm, moist environment, between 60 degrees F and 90degrees F, with relative humidity ranging from 65% to 85%. In that environment, flea eggs that have been deposited in carpeting, upholstery, cat bedding, cracks in hardwood floors, and other snug places hatch into larvae. A week or so later, a cocoon forms, inside of which the larvae mature into adults whose lives depend on a steady supply of blood meals. To obtain their nourishment, they hop onto cats, feed on the host's blood in small nips for several months or more, then lay eggs. The cycle is renewed when the eggs eventually drop off the cat onto the same carpeting, the same upholstery, the same cat bedding, and so forth.

The extent of a flea-bitten cat's suffering will depend on her sensitivity. She may have constant itching, or she may develop serious skin irritations that lead to infections, often as a result of her scratching and gnawing at the irritated area. Moreover, fleas can transmit tapeworms. To make every effort to protect your feline companion against assault and infestation by this dreadful little flea parasite, you will have to pay attention to the cat's environment as well as to her body.

Vacuum your home thoroughly and frequently. Don't overlook any area, and pay special attention to the places in which your cat prefers to play, lounge, or nap.

Groom your cat often (try to do it daily) with a fine-toothed comb; drown the fleas that you gather in a solution of warm, soapy water.

Wash your cat's bedding thoroughly every week or so in hot water and detergent, and spray the areas where she likes to lounge with a safe insecticide, usually one that contains permethrin. (Use only products that have been supplied or recommended by your veterinarian.)

Dips can be effective, especially with long-haired cats, but they must be administered weekly. (If the dips appear to make the cat's coat excessively dry, consult your veterinarian on the use of oily additives that may help the situation.)

Forget the flea collars. Veterinarians generally agree that the use of flea collars is largely ineffective in flea-allergic animals. Also, the efficacy of feeding your cat garlic, brewer's yeast, herbs, or other exotic dietary additives has yet to be scientifically established. Currently, many veterinarians favor the use of a relatively new collection of products – most of them applied topically – that effectively control fleas by killing adult fleas or sterilizing female fleas so that they are unable to reproduce.

Non Toxic Flea Remedy

Start Conservatively, Start Now!

It's time again to battle against the toughest army in the world - fleas.

In March they will start to work their way into your pet's fur, your rugs, your furniture, and INTO YOUR LIFE! But before you plan a frontal assault, get to know your enemy first.

The flea evolved as a highly specialized blood-sucking parasite at least 60 million years ago.

Vertically or horizontally, the flea can jump 150 times its own length...equal to a human jumping nearly a thousand feet!

A flea can survive for months without feeding.

It can withstand tremendous pressure – that's why it can survive the biting and scratching of flea tormented pets.

It can "launch" 50 times faster than the space shuttle, experiencing an acceleration of 140 g's.

The flea jumps on a host to suck blood, and then finds a dark nest to live in: a dog house, your carpet, etc.

It deposits its eggs in the nest and in a short time the eggs hatch into larvae. The larvae encases itself in a cocoon to transform into a pupa, which remains dormant until a host returns. When a host passes, it jumps on it as a blood hungry adult flea. This whole process takes about 3 weeks.

Its favorite nesting spot in the carpet is near the baseboard where there is the least amount of traffic.

No blood meal, no reproduction – the flea needs the protein in the blood to reproduce.

Vacuum Weekly – Add a little flea powder to the vacuum bag. For the first week vacuum every day, then weekly. After each vacuuming THROW OUT THE BAG!

Steam Clean Carpets– Professional equipment can suck up fleas deep in the carpet, and get into every nook and cranny, especially the baseboards. Don't use added deodorizers since they are harmful to pets.

Vacuum/Wash/Machine Dry – This will suck up, drown, and dry out any fleas in your pet's bedding, clothing, etc.

Flea Comb – A fine-tooth metal flea comb traps fleas for easy removal and drowning. This is especially important for animals with long or curly hair.

Before you purchase harsh chemical-based flea killers, try a ready-made nontoxic herbal, citric or eucalyptus-based flea shampoo, powder, spray or flea collar. Or try these:

Orange Oil Shampoo and Rub: ½ ounce of orange oil with ½ a bottle of mild human shampoo, then shampoo pet. The fleas are repelled by the citric base. Then once a week pour a small amount of orange oil in the palm of your hands, rub together, then rub onto your pet; especially behind ears, on belly, the rear and base of tail.

Lemon Skin Rinse: Slice 1 whole lemon very thin, keep the peel on. Steep lemon in a pint of hot water overnight. The next day sponge the rinse onto our pet's skin and let it dry. This is so safe you can use it daily on pets with severe flea problems.

Brewers Yeast: It is professed that after the pet eats brewers yeast, a flea-repelling aroma is secreted through the sweat glands. However, the only sweat gland locations are the tongue and pads of the feet. But if you still want to try it, use one-half or one teaspoon of brewers yeast, (depending on the size of your dog, cats use less) in their food. Don't force your pet to eat it if he doesn't like it.

If every conservative, nontoxic method has been used, and your pet is still suffering, then try a veterinarian recommended flea and tick product. The whole idea is to keep the fleas out of your home and off your pets without any of your own weaponry backfiring. If all precautions are taken, you will be the victor and the fleas will be the victim.