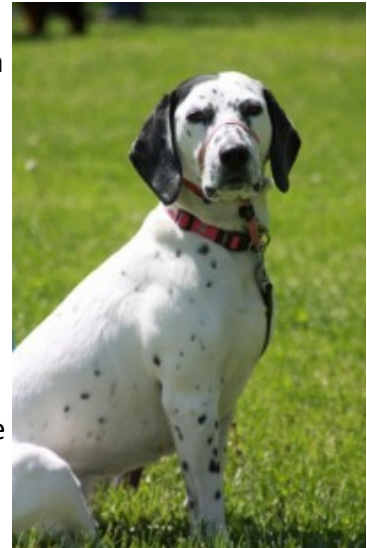


Flea Control: Prevention and Problem-Solving

Bolton Veterinary Hospital

Prevention is Key

A few fleas that make their way onto your pet can quickly escalate into a serious problem in your home. Without a comprehensive plan for flea control, owners can find themselves fighting a losing battle. A flea-infested dog or cat can introduce hundreds of new flea eggs into the home each day! The best way to manage fleas is through prevention, but this article will help you control fleas in your home even if they are already present.



Adult fleas (the biting stage) spend most of their life on the pet. Eggs are laid on the fur and fall off into carpeting, furniture cushions, bedding, and the soil outdoors. The eggs hatch and transform into larvae, pupae, and eventually adults to begin the cycle again.

Pet owners can break the cycle of flea development by eliminating the egg-laying adults. Several treatment options are listed below. A variety of other products can be found over-the-counter; we have included the products that we feel are safest and most effective on this list. Please note that these products may need to be supplemented with a bath using a soap-free shampoo (so as not to wash off spot-on product), especially if the animal is allergic to fleas. However, a flea bath alone will NOT be effective in controlling a flea infestation, as there is no long-lasting effect.

Spot-on products:

Vectra™ – Repels fleas for one month. Available from veterinarians without a prescription & typically a less expensive, yet effective product. Please note there is a specific Vectra for cats, the dog product “Vectra 3D” also includes tick control and is NOT safe for use on cats.

Frontline Plus™ - Kills adult fleas on pets for one month. Available over-the-counter. Please note a small percentage of pet owners have reported fleas being resistant to Frontline. Safe for cats.

Revolution™ – Prevents and controls fleas for one month. Small volume, ideal for pets with sensitive skin. This is also a heartworm preventative. Safe for cats.

Advantage Multi™ – Prevents and controls fleas for one month. Small volume, ideal for pets with sensitive skin. This is also a heartworm preventative. Safe for cats.

Advantage II™ – Prevents and controls all life stages of fleas for one month. Small volume, ideal for pets with sensitive skin. Safe for cats.

K9 Advantix™ – Repels fleas and ticks for one month. This product is NOT safe for cats.

Pills:

NexGard™ – Flavored like Heartgard, this chew tab controls fleas and ticks in dogs for one month.

Bravecto™ – This flavored chew tab protects against fleas and ticks in dogs for three months.

Sentinel™ – Prevents flea eggs from hatching for one month. Also a heartworm preventative. Safe for cats.

Trifexis™ – Protects against fleas, heartworm, and some intestinal parasites; lasts one month. Not recommended for dogs with a history of seizures. Can be given with a topical product if separated by at least one week.

Capstar™ – Kills adult fleas quickly, lasts 24 hours. Available without a prescription. Safe for cats.

Comfortis™ – Kills adult fleas, lasts one month. Can be given with a topical product if separated by at least one week. Safe for cats.



Collars:

Seresto™ – Controls fleas and ticks, one collar lasts up to eight months.

Scalibor™ – Controls fleas and ticks, one collar lasts up to six months. Not safe for cats.

If you are already experiencing a flea infestation...

How would you know if your pet has fleas? Run a fine-toothed comb through your pet's fur, especially towards their hind end. If you find little black "crumbs" in their coat, or live fleas, you've got a problem.

1. **All animals in the home must be treated** for a minimum of 3-4 months to prevent re-infestation.

Why 3-4 months? This is the duration of the flea life cycle. New fleas will continue to hatch in your home for 3-4 months, and by treating the pet with a preventative, we can "starve them out." Be sure to use species-appropriate products (some dog products cannot be used on cats).

2. **The environment must also be treated.** Frequent vacuuming of carpeting & upholstered furniture (empty the bag or canister each time!) and washing bedding on a hot cycle are essential. Heavily contaminated bedding should be discarded if not washable. An area spray or fogger may be used for quicker results or in the event of a heavier infestation. The fleas go where the pets go! If your pet sleeps in your bedroom and spends most of the day in the living room, focus your efforts here.

3. **All parts of the flea life cycle must be addressed.** Cleaning and treating the home removes flea eggs, larvae, and pupae. Treating the pet with a spot-on, pill, or collar will eliminate adults.

4. **The process may take time; patience and persistence are key.** However, by following this guide, you will find your way to the most efficient and cost-effective plan possible. Pets with flea allergies may require medical attention and a prescription for a steroid or antibiotic to control skin infection and irritation until the infestation is resolved.

Special Situations



Kittens present a unique challenge, as most products are not labeled as safe for very young kittens. They can die, as well, from anemia caused by a heavy flea burden. Preventing fleas from affecting adult pets in the home will reduce the likelihood the kittens will be affected. However, if fleas are already present, treating the home environment as described above will reduce the flea burden for kittens. A flea comb can be used to physically remove fleas from a young kitten. In some situations, a veterinarian may be able to use a flea control product at a smaller dose in younger/smaller kittens when the risk of flea anemia outweighs the risk of using a product.

Multi-pet households require extra effort in terms of prevention and control. With more pets in the home, flea problems quickly escalate. The tenets of control are the same, just more intensive. All pets in the home (and pets who visit the home!) must be treated.

Additional Resources:

www.petsandparasites.org/dog-owners/fleas – Summary of flea life cycle and control

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