

Dermatology and Allergy Services for Animals

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Fleas

Fleas are one of the most common causes of itchy skin in pets. Their presence causes scratching, biting, and self-trauma. When fleas bite, they inject saliva, which can cause an allergy (hypersensitivity). Pets with this hypersensitivity may develop flea allergy dermatitis (FAD), an extremely itchy disease which predisposes them to secondary bacterial and/or fungal infections. A well-planned flea control strategy targeted towards all stages of the flea life cycle is essential.

Female fleas consume 10-15 times their body weight in blood per day and large infestations can cause anemia in cats and dogs. Not only do fleas cause skin disease and anemia, but they can transmit tapeworms, which are intestinal parasites.

Adult fleas live off the blood of their host. Eggs are deposited and fall off into the environment, hatching 1-10 days later. The flea larva emerges able to crawl and lives in dark areas such as between carpet fibers and wooden floor boards. In about 5-12 days they spin a small cocoon and usually emerge as adults 1-4 weeks later, but can stay in this pupal stage for up to 6 months. The average lifecycle from egg to adult is 21 days, and one breeding female flea can produce 20,000 adults in 60 days! An effective flea control program must involve the entire household, as well as all animals in contact with the affected pet. The goal is to eliminate fleas from the pet and the environment to prevent re-infestation.



<http://www.domyownpestcontrol.com/images/content/flea.jpg>

Pet

1. Use an oral or topical flea control product as recommended by your veterinarian
2. Comb pet daily with a flea comb, putting hair and fleas into a bowl of soapy water.

Environment (Inside)

1. Vacuum and mop all floors daily, especially under furniture. Seal used vacuum bag(s) in a plastic bag and dispose of the vacuum bag outside of the home.
2. Wash kennel floors, kennel beddings, and any vehicles the pet is in contact with weekly
3. Steam cleaning carpets will help remove early life stages of fleas.
4. If needed, consult a pest control company before applying pesticides inside the home as flea "bombs" do not usually get under furniture and many products can be toxic to people and pets

Environment (Outside)

1. Block off access to crawl spaces
2. Keep lawn mowed and rake away leaves, loose grass and other debris which can harbor fleas
3. If needed, consider a commercial exterminator and outdoor spraying