



# External parasites - Fleas

HALL VETERINARY SURGERY BEHAVIOUR ADVICE



Flea tablets work by stopping the larva from emerging from the flea egg. Fleas ingest the blood of animals on these medications, and the female fleas then lay eggs that are unable to hatch. They do NOT kill adult fleas. These medications are essential to break the flea life cycle and stop the flea problem when used in conjunction with flea adulticide treatments.



Spot-on treatments are effective for adult fleas. Some include ingredients to inhibit the larva from emerging from the flea egg and some are active against larval development as well.



Flea collars, shampoos and powders are only effective for adult fleas so do not break the life cycle.

Fleas have a complex, four stage life cycle. Control of fleas on your pet and in your home must address all stages of this life cycle to stop the problem of flea infestation.

Dogs, cats can be hypersensitive or have an allergic reaction to flea saliva. When the flea bites your pet, the skin may react causing a rash of itchy red lumps and bumps. Naturally your pet will lick, chew and scratch this itchy area. It may result in painful sores and scabs with some hair loss. A single flea bite can cause your pet to become allergic, and you may never even see the flea.

Each animal has their own immune system which protects them against infections. This is a highly integrated system of cells and substances operating under many controls. The system can malfunction. When it under-reacts, an infection may be established. However, when the system overreacts, there is an allergic or hypersensitivity reaction. Some pets need only a single flea bite for their immune systems to overreact. Whilst others need many bites, and some don't react at all. 40% of all dogs are reactive to the saliva from a flea bite. Because so many pets are sensitive to fleas, good flea control is important. To control fleas, we need to work at many stages of their life cycle and their environment. Adult fleas are easy to kill, but their eggs and immature forms (larvae and pupae) are not.

When treating a flea infestation it is important to:

## 1. TREAT ALL OF YOUR PETS

All animals in the house must be individually treated. Treatment is based on the weight of the animal. REVOLUTION or ADVANTIX 'spot-on' can be used monthly on your dog to treat and/or prevent flea infestations. *Please note, do NOT apply Advantix to cats or permit your cat to groom or have close physical contact with a recently treated dog.* Newer products on the market (Comfortis®, NexGard® and Bravecto®) in tablet form, are proving popular and effective.

Flea collars and shampoos will only kill the adult fleas and do not break the flea life cycle as the tablets and top-spot products do.

## 2. TREAT THE ENVIRONMENT

This destroys the hiding places for fleas, eggs, larvae and pupae, and physically removes some of the population.

- ▶ Vacuum all the house and destroy waste immediately.
- ▶ Wash all lino or tiles in very hot water (particularly the cracks).
- ▶ Vacuum and wash cars, sheds, kennels, etc.
- ▶ Wash all bedding your pet uses in the hottest wash and dry cycles possible.
- ▶ Rake up garden debris and mow long grass.



## WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF FLEAS IN DOGS?

- ▶ Droppings or 'flea dirt' in a dog's coat
- ▶ Flea eggs on dog or in dog's environment
- ▶ Allergic dermatitis
- ▶ Excessive scratching, licking or biting at skin
- ▶ Hair loss
- ▶ Scabs and hot spots
- ▶ Pale gums
- ▶ Tapeworms

Adult flea and larval killer may be required in the pet's living space in heavily infested environments. However, the pet treatments listed above are often adequate in moderate to low flea infestation. All areas to which your pet has access (house, car, kennels, sheds) can be sprayed with a flea insecticide and a growth inhibitor (eg methoprene, fenoxycarb). There are products specifically made for house use (eg RAID®) and others for outside use (eg ENVIRO®). Don't forget the protected areas in the garden (eg under balconies and eaves).

NOTE: A mistake seen is the 'more is better' approach that some people take when using flea products. More is NOT better when it comes to chemicals or medications! Follow package directions when using over-the-counter products and medications. Our staff are happy to advise you which product best suits your pet/s.

For advice about dog training and behaviour issues PHONE: 6230 2223 or EMAIL: [behaviouradvice@hallvet.com.au](mailto:behaviouradvice@hallvet.com.au)