

Fleas! Fleas!! Fleas!!!

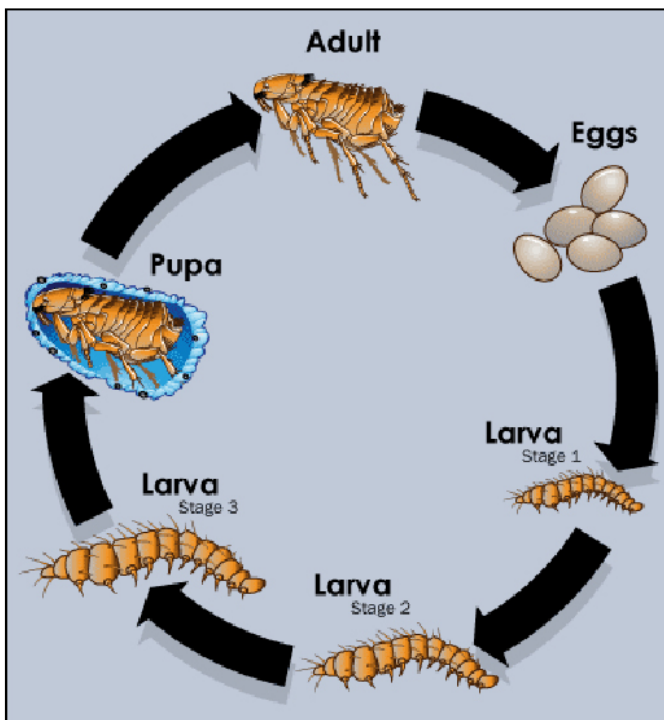
Fleas are the most common external parasite of our furry friends and flea allergy dermatitis (FAD) is the most common skin disease!

Flea control has always been a challenge because the **adult** fleas cause the clinical signs, yet the **majority** of the flea population (eggs, larvae and pupae) are to be found **off** the pet, in and around the home! The ideal flea control program utilises products that target the various stages of the flea life cycle, not only just the adult fleas on the pet.

In order to help you win your battle against the fleas by selecting the right products we will start by telling you about the life cycle of the flea.



Know your foe - The Life Cycle of the flea!



Adult fleas lay eggs in an animal's hair coat which then fall off their host and into the environment. The egg will hatch into a larva, which then turn into a pupa, and then become the annoying adult flea that jumps back onto your cat and dog to repeat their life cycle again! Female fleas can lay up to 50 eggs a day within 24 hours after they start eating (your pet's blood!!)

These tricky buggers have some tricks up their sleeves. They can control the **amount of time** they require to develop into adults depending on the weather and availability of the host. In optimal weather, which is our nice warm Aussie summer, the entire life cycle of the flea can be completed in **as few as 16 days!** And in the not so nice weather, the winter period, the fleas could pause their development in the pupae stage for many months; they are stimulated to hatch into adults by vibration, warming and increased carbon dioxide.

So the whole flea cycle can range from **2 weeks to 8 months!**

"My dog/cat didn't have fleas last month and suddenly they popped out of nowhere!"

Stray cats and Australian wildlife (e.g. possums) and rats also carry fleas too! They are like little "salt shakers"; they come to your backyard, shake a few flea eggs into your garden and move on to the next home. These little eggs then develop into adult fleas and jump onto your pet! Remember, fleas can lay dormant in your house for up to **8 months**, so the fleas you are seeing this year could have been from the previous year!

Our battle plan:

The key points to break this flea cycle are pretty simple:

- 1) Kill the adult fleas before they breed
- 2) Kill the babies (eggs and larvae) before they become adults

(Sounds sinister but I haven't found a person that loves fleas yet!)

Step 1- Kill the adult

AIM: Kill adult fleas and ensure new fleas that jump onto your pet continue to be killed.

A "residual adulticide" (=kills adult fleas & hangs around) is usually best (see chart pg 3 for products). Note that the commonly used residual adulticidal flea products actually take SEVERAL HOURS to kill fleas and **they do not kill within seconds or repel them**. We would expect to see a FEW fleas on the pet for at least 3-8 weeks or occasionally longer, especially as you have to remember that new fleas are jumping on your pet every day.

The speed of kill of the insecticide actually **slows down** during the **3rd and 4th week** after application due to decreasing insecticide levels on the pet. This may allow some fleas to survive long enough to produce eggs prior to the next dose. If you haven't been applying the product regularly (i.e. late by a couple of days to few weeks), there will be **no more insecticide** on your pet and you are giving the fleas a chance to breed again, filling the house & garden with fleas as eggs, larvae and pupae!!

Also important, **treat all your animals** at the same time! Just because you saw some fleas on 1 pet doesn't mean the other one doesn't have it! You may as well not do anything if you only treat 1 pet at a time, the other pet you have is going to be the flea's breeding ground!

Remember the flea you saw now would have already laid 50 eggs into your house which will be emerging as adults in the next month! So keep re-applying product regularly!

If you have trouble choosing a product, speak to one of our staff! We would love to help!

Step 2- Kill the babies

AIM: Eliminating immature life stages and emerging fleas in the indoor and outdoor environment.

The adult fleas you may see on your pet account for **only 5%** of the likely flea population in your home. Flea eggs, flea larval stages, and pupae add up to all the rest (**95%!**).

The larvae live in your environment, hiding in your carpet and in your garden in the shade. If you think there are no larvae in your house just because you have wooden floors, you are wrong. The gaps in between the floorboards are the perfect environment for larvae to develop into fleas!

If you neglect to treat the pet's environment (the premises), you will **miss more than 90%** of the developing flea population -- the eggs, larvae and pupae, which will mature and become adult fleas and jump back onto your pet!



What can I do??

Things you need to do apart from treating the pet:

1. **Wash** all animal bedding (>60 C) in hot water and dry under the sun.
2. **Vacuum!** - Vacuuming removes many of the eggs, larvae and pupae developing within the home. Vacuuming also stimulates pre-adult fleas to emerge sooner from their insecticide-resistant cocoons, thus hastening their contact with insecticide residues in the carpet. Vacuum thoroughly, especially in areas where pets rest or sleep. Don't forget to vacuum along edges of rooms and beneath furniture, cushions, beds, and throw rugs!
3. **Flea bomb** the house – Most products in the market contains **insect growth regulators** (IGR's). This disrupts the cycle of the flea, preventing eggs from hatching, killing larvae and prevents adult fleas from reproducing.

Always read and follow label directions on the insecticide container. Other than the person performing the application, people and pets should be out of the house during treatment. People and pets should also remain off treated surfaces until the spray has dried. This may take several hours, depending on carpet type, ventilation and method of application. Opening windows and running the fan or air conditioner after treatment will enhance drying and minimize odour.

4. **Outdoors** – This area is hardest to treat. Possum and stray cats come to your garden and leave some flea eggs behind. You can try to spray shade areas and areas your pet tends to hang out, and if it has bedding in the garden, bring it in & wash it.

Once fleas establish in your house, it can **take up to 8 months** to get rid of them (remember those eggs, larvae, pupae hiding in your house!) But if you follow these steps, you will eventually win the battle with the fleas!

Most importantly after you get rid of the fleas – keep up **regular flea management** for your pet! Stop them from having a chance to re-establish in your house! (So you and your pet don't have to go through this torture again!)

Flea product summary

Product	Method of application	Action
Advantage / Advocate	Back of the neck	Kills Adults & Larvae
Advantix ** Dogs only	Back of the neck	Kills Adults & Larvae
Bravecto Dogs only	Orally (lasts 3 months)	Kills Adults (3 months!)
Bravecto (Spot on)	Back of the neck (6 months for both cats and dogs)	Kills Adults (6 months fleas AND paralysis ticks!)
Capstar #	Orally	Kills Adults
Comfortis / Panoramis	Orally (by mouth)	Kills Adults
Nexgard Dogs only	Orally	Kills Adults
Revolution	Back of the neck	Kills Adults & Larvae & Eggs

**** Toxic to cats.** Do not use this on your cat and do not use this product on your dog if you have a cat at home especially if the cat grooms the dog or they share a basket.

Only lasts for **24 hours**

Please do not hesitate to ask our staff for advice what products suit you best!

Trouble shooting:

“(Insert product name) is not working! The fleas are resistant to it!”

There is currently NO research paper showing that there is actual proven resistance to flea products in the flea population. Here are the possible scenarios you have been experiencing at home:

- 1) You have **a lot, a lot and a lot** of fleas living in your house!

Fact: Think logically, you have a lot of fleas; obviously your flea product is going to run out sooner than usual trying to kill the horde of fleas that kept jumping on to your pet!

Solution: You can reapply flea products as often as every 2 weeks if needed or, even better, you can choose a different product to alternate with every 2 weeks to make sure the fleas are not getting use to the product.

- 2) The product you are using actually *sterilises* fleas.

Fact: You are doing something to stop the flea cycle, just at a different spot, so you would get a different result!

Solution: Check the chart about the flea product you current use. If the product *only* sterilises fleas, you might want to switch to/add on a product that **kills** the fleas. Advantix and Frontline are the 2 products that have both killing and sterilising effect. Speak to one of our staffs if you have trouble picking one.

- 3) It's only been *a month* since your first flea treatment.

Fact: None of the products in the market repel fleas; they either **kill or sterilise** fleas. Don't forget the ones hiding in your house! Fleas can take up to **eight months** to get rid of once they are established in your house!

Solution: Be patient and **don't be slack! Regular flea control!** Clean the environment! You will win eventually!

- 4) Have you treated **all** the animals at home at the **same time**?

FACT: even if only the dog goes outside and the cat stays indoor or if you only seen fleas on Fluffy but not Puffy, **all** animals in the household will. be subjected to getting fleas on them! Fleas don't discriminate against pets, as long as there is a meal (your pet) around, they will be happy!

Solution: Treat **all** your animals **at the same time!**

Conclusion:

Fleas not only make your poor furry friend itch like crazy, it can also cause allergic response, a condition call Flea Allergy Dermatitis and they can carry disease. Your pet can get very miserable with a constant itch going. Prevention is always better than cure! Make sure you keep applying flea prevention products regularly!

Note: other conditions may also cause pet to itch, if you are not sure if something else is making your animal itch, best speak to one of our vets.

Extra information.

Chewing & swallowing fleas will give your pet tapeworm!! You may see small white things like grains of rice in their poo or in their bed. When you see fleas please use a Tapeworm tablet every month. If your pet is due for their normal 3-monthly allwormer then this will take care of tapeworm but on the in between months use a Tapewormer.