

# SOUTH EAST COUNTRY VETS

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## FLEAS! FLEAS! FLEAS!

Fleas. They make pets miserable and humans itch just at the thought of them! Fleas are the most common external parasite to plague companion animals and they can make yours and your pet's life miserable.

### WHAT ARE FLEAS?

Fleas are wingless insects that feed on blood from your beloved cat or dog and can jump up to two feet high. These tiny insects can live anywhere from two weeks to twelve months in the environment and your pet's fur. They cause the skin to become itchy and irritated and can cause your pet to become very unsettled and unhappy.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF MY PET HAS FLEAS?

If you see your cat or dog scratching often and persistently it is time for a checkup! If there are small, fast moving insects running through your pet's fur they are most likely fleas. Check for small black spots in their coat and on their bedding, this is called 'flea dirt' and is actually dried blood excreted by fleas.

### COMMON SIGNS OF A FLEA INFESTATION

If your pet exhibits any of the following signs, they most likely have fleas.

- itchy/irritated skin, persistent scratching
- severe hair loss or hair thinning
- chewing and licking, especially around the rump area
- pale lips or gums, especially in young/small animals
- tapeworms in faeces
- bites on your arms or legs

### WHY ARE FLEAS A PROBLEM?

The saliva of a flea contains chemicals that work by softening the skin of your pet in order to make feeding easier. These chemicals are irritating to the skin and cause your pet to become extremely itchy. In some cases they cause an allergy known as Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD). This allergy is usually seen as hair loss, redness and skin irritation around the tail base or rump area which not only looks horrible but also makes life nearly unbearable for your pet.

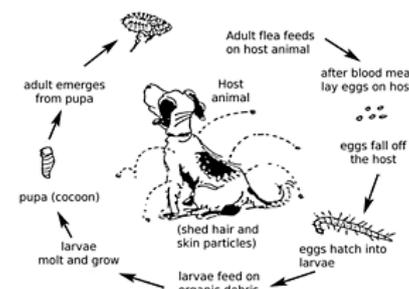


### LIFECYCLE OF THE FLEA

Fleas thrive in warm, moist environments and climates making summer the prime time for flea numbers to multiply into the millions. It is important to understand the lifecycle of the flea to be able to get on top of both adult flea numbers as well as their eggs.

Fleas have four main stages within their lifecycle: egg, larval, pupae and adult. The span of the lifecycle can range from a few weeks to many months, with larva waiting for the perfect conditions before morphing into adulthood.

EGGS	- eggs laid on pets can fall off onto carpet, bedding or ground
LARVAE	- diet of faeces of adult fleas ('flea dirt') - lasts approximately 5-18 days
PUPAE	- cocoon phase that can last from 3 days to years - hatch into adult during warm moist weather
ADULT	- prefer to live on animal rather than in bedding or on the ground - diet is blood consumed from feeding on animals - Females can lay up to 50 eggs per day!



### FLEA PREVENTION – WHAT SHOULD I USE?

There are many different flea prevention treatments available from veterinary products right through to home grown remedies that have been passed down through the generations. It is advised that you speak with staff at your

local veterinary clinic to determine which product is safest and best suited for you and your pet. With so many products available - what works?

### **1. Simparica**

- A tasty chewable tablet for dogs given once every month.
- Kills adult fleas before they lay eggs thus breaking the lifecycle and also prevents paralysis ticks!
- Great for dogs that love to swim, have lots of baths or for owners that don't like to place anything onto the coat
- Safe for dogs from 8wks of age

### **2. Bravecto**

- A tasty chewable tablet for dogs given once every 3 months.
- Kills adult fleas before they lay eggs thus breaking the lifecycle and also prevents paralysis ticks!
- Great for dogs that love to swim, have lots of baths or for owners that don't like to place anything onto the coat
- Safe for dogs from 8wks of age

### **6. Frontline Spray**

- Spray used to prevent adult fleas, paralysis ticks, other ticks and lice when used every two to three weeks
- Spot on that is placed on the skin underneath the fur; great for cat/dog households
- Spray is safe for use on puppies and kittens from 2 days of age

### **7. Fido's Flea shampoo**

- Not effective as a sole flea control method, however, does offer a backup option to regular flea treatments
- To be used whenever fleas are present, will also reduce the amount of flea dirt present that will feed larvae
- Safe for use on cats and dogs from 8wks of age (other products available for puppies and kittens)

### **9. Capstar**

- Fast knock-down tablet that will kill any fleas on the dog for a 12-24hr period
- NOT a long term solution due to its short acting ability
- Good for when a high flea burden is noticed and quick relief is required before starting other treatments

## **HOT TIPS FOR GETTING ON TOP OF A FLEA INFESTATION**

The best method for getting on top of a large flea infestation is to do it all at once! It may take some planning but it is the easiest and most effective process to ensure maximal effect on the current flea population in your household.

1. Choose a day. This day will be flea extermination day
2. Arm yourself with everything you will need
3. Flea products for animals (consult your local vet clinic for products suitable for your pets)
4. Flea washes for bedding / bags for disposing of old bedding
5. Vacuum cleaner
6. Flea bombs / garden lime for treating infested areas outside the house
7. Start by collecting all pet / human bedding. Human bedding needs to be washed on a hot cycle and hung out to dry in the sun. Pet bedding to be washed or disposed of.
8. Vacuum the entire house (under beds, carpets, mattresses etc.)
9. Make sure all animals are outside. Close up the house and prepare flea bombs OR get the inside/outside of your house professionally exterminated. Don't forget the car if your pets often travel with you.
10. If using flea bombs, whilst they work their magic get your gardening lime and spread it lightly anywhere your pets sleep (under the house, concrete, grass areas etc). Be careful though as it can be irritating to both yours and your pets airways so use the appropriate protective equipment and make sure they are out of the area.
11. Wash your pet in a flea shampoo
12. Give your pet their monthly/quarterly flea tablet
13. Once flea bomb or extermination has finished, re-vacuum the house
14. Enjoy your newly flea free environment!

It is important to remember that in severe cases it can take up to 6 months before you begin to see no fleas at all. Year round treatment of *all* of your pets with reliable products is important in getting on top of your flea infestation and preventing it.

*This information sheet is not intended as a substitute for a veterinary consultation.*

*It is recommended that a consultation be arranged with a veterinary practitioner if you have any concerns with your pet's health.*