

How to Keep Fleas Away from Your Pets All Year Long

Keeping fleas away from your pets is a year-long job. Many people mistakenly believe that fleas are only active during the summer months. However, only sustained temperatures below 30° F kill off flea eggs, larvae, and adults.

To prevent and control fleas, you need to fight them at all stages of development. Research has shown that for every adult flea you see, there are approximately ten flea eggs, seven flea larvae, and two flea cocoons.

The flea life cycle works like this.

- Adult fleas jump onto your pet to feed. After feeding, females mate and begin laying eggs within 24 to 36 hours. Females can lay up to 50 eggs per day for three months.
- The eggs fall off your pet into the surrounding environment (*e.g.*, pet bedding, furniture, crate).
- Flea larvae hatch and eat food from adult flea feces. Then they form a cocoon and pupate. During this time, they undergo metamorphosis and emerge as an adult flea. The larvae can remain in the cocoon up to 30 weeks and emerge when conditions are optimal.

Flea larvae, eggs, and cocoons are often in areas where you won't see them—under furniture, beneath cushions, and in the carpet. They are quite small and difficult to spot.

To prevent fleas from biting your pet and infesting your home, follow these tips.

- **Use flea prevention on your pet all year long.** A variety of flea control options exist, including oral tablets and chews, collars, topical treatments, shampoos, sprays, and dips. Talk to your veterinarian about the best product for your pet. Whichever option you choose, use it year-round.
- **Regularly groom your pet.** Regular bathing and grooming prevents fleas and highlights any emerging problems, such as excessive shedding, red patches, or small brown or black specks on the skin. If you have a long-haired pet, keep their hair short to prevent fleas from hiding.
- **Keep your home and yard clean.** Fleas like moist, warm, sheltered areas with organic debris. To prevent fleas in your yard, mow the grass, trim the shrubs, and clean up fallen leaves. Discourage the presence of flea-infested animals (*e.g.*, feral cats, raccoons) by not leaving out pet food. Seal off openings to crawl spaces, garages, sheds, and under decks,

which might become a nesting place for animals. If needed, use a yard spray that kills fleas and ticks.

- **Clean pet accessories regularly.** Once a week, wash your pet's bedding and soft toys in hot water. Wash crates or carriers with hot soapy water. The hot water will kill the eggs, larvae, and cocoons that may have fallen off your pet.
- **Vacuum often.** Flea eggs, larvae, and cocoons often hide in carpets. Once a week, vacuum the areas where your pet spends time—including in and around their bed and their regular walking paths. A flea collar in your vacuum bag will help kill any emerging fleas. Don't forget to vacuum under couch cushions and furniture. Regular vacuuming can eliminate up to 30% of larvae and 60% of flea eggs. If you see fleas in the house, increase vacuuming to once a day. If your pet rides in the car, vacuum your car too.
- **Check your pet regularly.** The sooner you find evidence of fleas, the faster you can take steps to prevent an infestation. Use a flea comb to periodically check your pet for fleas, especially in warmer months when fleas are most active.
- **Use diatomaceous earth (DE) and insect growth regulators (IGRs).** DE is a talc-like powder that is non-toxic for pets and children but dries out fleas at all stages. Sprinkle DE under furniture cushions, near baseboards, under furniture, and in hardwood floor cracks. However, be careful not to inhale too much. IGRs interrupt the flea life cycle and prevent them from reproducing. IGRs are safe for use around pets and people. You can purchase IGRs to mix and spray onto your carpet, rugs, and hard floors. If you combine IGRs with insecticides, you'll kill adult fleas and prevent them from reproducing.

By following these tips, you'll keep your home and pet free of fleas all year long.