



Officer Vet

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FLEA CONTROL

Flea infestation is a common parasitic condition of dogs and cats. Fleas cause severe irritation to your pet, and some pets are allergic to fleas and develop flea allergy dermatitis which is a nasty skin condition. A heavy flea burden on a young kitten or puppy can cause anaemia and death. Although fleas need dogs and cats to survive, they will occasionally bite humans, and this is obviously a problem if your home develops an infestation.

Your pet does not necessarily have to come into contact with other dogs or cats in order to pick up a few fleas. In fact, most fleas are picked up through contact with the infested environment and this can be anywhere! In homes, gardens, parks, streets – these are all potential breeding areas for fleas.

Some facts about fleas

- There are four stages in a flea's lifecycle: egg – larva – pupa – adult.
- 95% of the flea population lives in the pet's environment and only 5% on the pet.
- Fleas can jump to a height of 17cm and an amazing distance of 48cm!
- One flea will lay about 2000 eggs in its lifetime. This means that if your dog or cat picks up a flea outside, and it is left untreated, within a year you would have 350,000 fleas in your home!
- Fleas are also responsible for giving your pet's tapeworm.

How can I tell if my pet has fleas?

Sometimes it may be obvious if the pet is scratching a lot. Another telltale sign is a bald patch just above the tail where the pet has been biting and scratching. Sometimes it is not so obvious and therefore even if your pet is not scratching it may still have fleas. The best way to tell if your dog or cat has fleas is to bring them in to the clinic for a free flea check. We will thoroughly check their coat for signs of fleas and flea dirt and if necessary advise you on the best treatment plan.

Are fleas only a problem in the summer?

Fleas love the warmer weather, and if your dog or cat is not on regular flea prevention during summer, chances are they will pick up fleas. Unfortunately, due to the heating in our homes and the generally mild climate in Australia fleas often occur all year round, even in winter.

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What are the best products to use on my cat and dog?

Flea collars/sprays/powders:

These are the old fashioned approaches to flea control and they do not work! You may notice less scratching for a couple of days after use but eventually the fleas breed and the infestation continues.

Flea rinses:

Washing your pet and applying a flea rinse is also just a temporary solution. It will kill any fleas that are on your pet, but as the majority of fleas live in the environment they will eventually jump back onto the animal, as the rinse is only effective for 3 to 4 days.

Spot-on products:

For example: Frontline & Advantage, work extremely well. They are easy to use – just a small amount of liquid onto the back of the neck. It spreads over the pet's coat, killing any fleas. It then stays absorbed in the skin for 1 month and therefore any fleas that come into contact with the pet will consequently be affected. Just be aware that spot on products sold in the supermarket are not as effective.

Combination Products:

There are some fantastic combination products available that double up as heartworm prevention and intestinal wormers.

How often should I treat my pet for fleas?

Most flea control products are used monthly. Some people use flea control year round, others just over the warmer months and some just when a flea problem arises. The cost of effectively treating and preventing fleas varies depending on the product and the individual requirements of you and your pet, and as such we will be happy to discuss the best option to meet your needs.

It is also important to bare in mind that all dogs and cats in the household should be treated to prevent ongoing flea infestations.

If you have any questions regarding flea control please contact the clinic at any time.

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