

How to get rid of Fleas

Fleas are a type of external parasite. There are different species of fleas, such as dog fleas, cat fleas and rabbit fleas, and it is possible for many species of fleas to infest more than one host species.

- Fleas only suck blood from their hosts as adults.
- Adult fleas have mouthparts that pierce skin and suck blood from their host.
- A flea can live from between 14 days to a year.
- A female flea can lay up to 50 eggs in one day - that's 1,500 in a lifetime!
- Some types of flea can leap more than a hundred times their own body length.
- With a flea infestation it is estimated that only 5% of the problem is on your pet, 95 per cent of flea eggs, larvae and pupae live in the environment, such as the house, garden and car.
- Due to their tough protective cocoon, no chemical can kill flea pupae.



Signs your pet might have fleas

- Scratching at themselves or chewing at their fur
- Visualisation of brown insects running through their coat

- Areas of hair loss, bald or sore patches
- Spots and scabs
- Redness and irritation
- Thickened skin
- Tiny dark specks on their skin, that goes red when wet
- You've been getting bitten too!

To confirm that your pet has fleas you can use a fine-toothed comb to check for the presence of fleas. If you comb them over a piece of wet kitchen paper or a tissues, the black specks will turn a reddish-brown colour in the water. This is due to the blood that the fleas ingest when they feed off your pet, and what you are seeing is their flea dirt!



Flea bites and what do they do?

Flea bites not only make your pet itchy and uncomfortable, but they also bring other problems and potentially spread disease:

- **Allergic reactions:** pets can be hypersensitive to flea saliva and suffer an allergic reaction (= flea allergic dermatitis / FAD)
- **Blood loss:** fleas feed on blood, so young or frail animals can become weak and even die as a result of anaemia.
- **Tapeworm:** flea larvae can become infected with tapeworm eggs. If your pet eats an infected flea it can become host to this parasite. If your pet has fleas you should also make sure your pet is treated for tapeworm.

- **Disease:** fleas can also pass diseases to your pets, e.g. myxomatosis is a serious disease in rabbits that can be spread by fleas.

How to get rid of fleas

It's essential to treat both your pet and your home, as fleas can survive in the environment without a host for many months. Here's how to do it...

Firstly, treat the pet

- Regularly use **flea treatment** on your pets to both prevent and get rid of fleas. Speak to us for advice on the best flea products that will work for your pet.
- Options include **tablets, spot-on preparations or injections.**
- Some products only kill the adult fleas but some also stop the eggs hatching, so ask us for advice!
- **Treat ALL** in-contact animals.
- If you spot fleas on your pet, **treat them quickly**, as they can give your cat or dog tapeworms and spread disease.
- Make sure you give your dog or cat a **tapeworm treatment** too.
- Bath your pet to try to remove as many fleas and eggs as possible.
- Brush them with a fine comb.



Secondly, treat the environment

- Regularly vacuum everywhere your pet has been

Seeing adult fleas unfortunately means there will be all of the flea life stages (eggs, larvae and pupae) around the house, waiting to develop into new fleas. As they walk round their home environment, flea eggs will drop off them on to the carpets like using a salt and pepper shaker.

Regularly Hoover the house. Remember to do hard floors as well as carpet and rugs, the furniture, under the sofa and don't forget where they go in the car! They all need doing.

The vibrations from the vacuum cleaner encourage the larvae and pupae to come up out of the carpet pile. They then hatch out into new fleas and jump on to a treated pet, once they do this, they will be killed by the treatment your pet has received. Vacuuming will also vacuum up some of the different flea life stages. Remember to empty the Hoover bag afterwards!

- **Wash pet bedding**

Boil wash all bedding at more than 60°C to kill the flea eggs.

Remember to wash any bedding or blankets that they've been lying or sleeping on, and also what they lay on in the car.

- **Allow pets access to their usual places**

A pet that has received flea treatment is going to help resolve the infestation, so you can let them go wherever they usually do in the home. Fleas will hatch out and jump onto your pet, they will feed, ingest the product and be killed quickly.

When you have a flea infestation situation, you may still see fleas on your pet even after they've been treated. This is because the flea life cycle is 3 weeks long and you are seeing the new flea arrivals before they die.

- **Turn up the heating**

Increasing the temperature and humidity in the house encourages the pupae and larvae to hatch out and develop into adult fleas. The sooner they hatch out, the sooner they are killed and the sooner we get on top of the problem.

- **Use a household spray**

Household sprays need to be used throughout the home and on non-washable furniture, carpets and home textiles. This helps to kill fleas, eggs and larvae and get on top of a home infestation even faster.

Remember to spray hard to reach areas such as under sofas and furniture, also don't forget to treat inside the vacuum and the car. Most good quality household sprays will be effective for a full year with one application.

Household sprays should never be used on pets.



Taking these steps helps fight a flea infestation faster, but it takes time and an infestation may seem to get worse before it gets better. We have to wait for all the flea pupae to develop into new fleas before the problem is over. This can take three months or sometimes longer.

Don't lose faith!! If your pets are treated appropriately and you've sprayed your home, the infestation will be on its way out.

To book in for your pet in for a health check please call us on 01423 228080 or visit www.clarohillvets.co.uk