

## Flea Infestations & Prevention

### What are fleas and where do they come from?

Fleas are small, brown, fast-moving parasites that live on your pet and in your home. They feed on the blood of animals and people by biting the skin. Pets almost always catch fleas from the environment, rather than directly from another animal. These fleas can come from the house they live in, the outdoors (where flea-infested wildlife has been), or even from your shoes if they have hitched a ride on you!

### Why should I treat my pet for fleas, I can't see any and they are not itchy?

Pets with fleas are not always itchy, and only a few fleas are needed to start an infestation, as a single flea can lay 20-50 eggs per day! As well as causing itchy pets, fleas can:

- Spread tapeworm to your dog or cat
- Bite humans, causing itchy rashes
- Spread *Bartonella* bacteria to your cat, who can then infect you with Cat Scratch Disease
- Cause allergic reactions in pets and people
- Cause anaemia and serious illness in very young kittens and puppies

It is much easier to prevent flea infestations than treat them once they have established themselves in your home and on your pet. This is why regular preventative treatment is recommended.

### How do I prevent fleas?

Many effective treatments are available to prevent fleas on your pet. Some come in the form of a spot-on (e.g. Advocate, Bravecto), others as a tablet (Nexgard, Bravecto), and some as collars (e.g. Seresto). Some last 1 month, whilst others can last up to 3 months, and it is important to give the product on time to avoid periods where your home and pet are unprotected.

Many products also protect against ticks and worms at the same time. Talk to your vet or vet nurse to find the most suitable treatment combination for your pet.

Recently, many fleas have started to become resistant to some treatments, especially those containing fipronil, which is in many pet shop formulations.

### How do I eradicate a flea infestation?

Adult fleas jump onto your pet where they mate, and within 24 hours females begin laying eggs that fall off into your home. Larvae hatch from these eggs and feed on the faeces of adult fleas, hiding in carpet fibres, soft furnishings, and protected places. They then form a protective cocoon (which is resistant to insecticides) for 1-4 weeks. Adult fleas emerge from this cocoon when they are stimulated by heat or vibration that tells them a new host is nearby. They leap onto the animal to complete the cycle.

It is important to remember, therefore, that 95% of the infestation is in your home, where the eggs and larvae are living. You must treat both the animal and the environment during an infestation.

## Flea Treatments

Contact your vet promptly for effective flea treatments to give to your pet to kill adult fleas.

- Treat all animals in the household
- Treat your pet for worms too, as fleas can spread tapeworm

## Vacuumping

Vacuumping reduces egg and cocoon numbers, as well as encouraging resistant cocoons to hatch into vulnerable adults (by providing heat and vibration)

- Include cracks in wood floors, carpets, curtains, soft furnishings, and upholstery
- Vacuum busy areas like the living room, kitchen, and bedrooms daily
- For everywhere else, vacuum at least weekly
- Empty the vacuum or dispose of the bag outside immediately after each vacuumping

Vacuumping like this should continue for at least 2 weeks to catch all stages of the parasite life cycle.

## Flea Sprays

*Indorex Flea Spray* and *RIP Fleas Extra Spray* contain insecticides that kill adult fleas, eggs, and larvae. They also contain an insect growth regulator that prevents larval development for up to 12 months.

1. Vacuum your home first, to stimulate cocoon hatching and reduce egg numbers
2. Remove pets and children from the room that will be treated
3. Close windows and doors and spray the entire floor area and furnishings
4. Open the windows and ventilate for 1 hour before reintroducing pets and children
5. Vacuum again in 24 hours

Keep vacuumping every couple of days for at least 2 weeks, to catch all parasites at all stages of the life cycle.

Keep up with regular prescription flea treatments for your pet to minimise the risk of infestations occurring in the future! Flea and worming products are included on Minster's Pet Health Plan, please ask a member of the team or visit our website for more information: <https://minstervets.co.uk/what-we-offer/pet-health-plan/>