



FACTSHEET

Flea Allergic Dermatitis

The most common reason for skin disease in the dog and cat is flea bite dermatitis . The reason for this is the saliva the flea injects under the skin when it is feeding. The saliva can be very irritant like a midge bite to us and as some people are more irritated by midge bites so is the same for cats and dogs.

With the irritation the cat will lick and groom itself more frequently leading to loss of fur (baldness) or broken hairs which can be felt over the back or it will lick its lips and so produce sores around the mouth or scratch itself leading to scabs on the back (miliary eczema) or scabs around the face and neck.

For the dog nibbling at the coat or scratching leads to damage to the skin resulting in further problems with overgrowth of bacteria or yeast on the skin and the typical doggy smell.

The Flea Life Cycle

Most of the life cycle of the flea is found off the cat or dog as pupae larvae or eggs. Fleas hatch out from pupae stimulated by vibration and carbon dioxide a potential host produces. Once hatched they then jump about in search for a host and within 5 minutes of landing on a host they are feeding.

Fleas will start breeding within 24 hours and a female flea will produce 50 eggs per day These eggs drop into the environment and then hatch out to become larvae which feed off other flea eggs or the dried blood faecal pellets the flea produces after a blood meal. The larvae burrow away from light and move with gravity so will go to the underside of a carpet or deep down in a sofa or cracks between floor boards

Treatment for Fleas needs to be Multi-factorial

Just killing the adult fleas on your pet will only be a temporary solution as the source of the fleas is in the environment.

Firstly the environment needs to be treated with

- 1) Hot washing all items (at 60 centigrade) that the pet lies on to kill all the stages
- 2) Hoovering can remove eggs, larvae and pupae from the environment but the pupae can lie dormant deep in the carpet or other soft furnishings where the dog has laid. A steam cleaner can be useful to kill these pupae
- 3) Household sprays are good but will not act against pupae only against eggs larvae and adult fleas(for 2 weeks only). Care must be taken in their use as they are toxic to fish and birds.

Pet Treatments

We recommend products that stop further egg production and rapid death of the adult flea to minimise the number of flea bites and so exposure to flea saliva.

This can be sprays, spot ons, tablets or collars and a discussion needs to be had as to which is the most appropriate treatment for you and your pet.

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