

# FLEAS

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- Ridding your home of fleas can be a daunting and costly endeavor. Unlike most household pests, fleas bite dogs and cats as well as people. The bites can cause intense itching and irritation, and a hypersensitive animal will often require veterinary assistance. Fleas can also transmit tapeworms and bacterial infections.
- The pests are highly prolific – the biting adult stage might be living on the pet, in addition to hundreds or thousands of eggs, larvae, and pupae elsewhere in the home or yard. If early signs of fleas are ignored, infestations can quickly spiral out of control.

- Fleas are common external parasites of both dogs and cats. The adults are ravenous blood-feeders, consuming up to 15 times their body weight in blood per day. Pets initially become infested when adult fleas occurring indoors or outdoors jump on the animal.
- With the ability to jump vertically up to about 6 inches, the adults can easily hitch a ride onto a passing dog or cat, or even the shoes and pant legs of a human.
- Adult fleas spend most of their time on the dog or cat, not in the carpet. This is why treatment of the pet is an essential step in ridding a home of fleas.

- Insecticide Application – Always read and follow instructions on the container. Many different products are available for home flea treatment. The most effective ones contain ingredients such as permethrin, imidacloprid, or dinotefuran that are lethal to the biting adult stage, and an “insect growth regulator” (e.g., methoprene, pyriproxyfen) that halts development of flea eggs and larvae.



■ **IMPORTANCE** – Infestation by fleas may cause severe inflammation of the skin and intense itching. Although many animals acquire partial immunity after constant or repeated attacks, individuals (especially humans) can occasionally become sensitized after exposure and develop allergies.

■ Species that attack people and livestock include the cat flea (*Ctenocephalides felis*), the so-called human flea (*Pulex irritans*), the dog flea (*Ctenocephalides canis*), the sticktight flea (*Echidnophaga gallinacea*), and the jigger, or chigoe, flea (*Tunga penetrans*). Poultry may be parasitized by the European chicken flea (*Ceratophyllus gallinae*) and, in the United States, by the western chicken flea (*Ceratophyllus niger*).