

## Fleas in Dogs

Fleas are one of the most common parasites caught by dogs. Almost every dog will suffer an infestation at some point in their lives.

### Why should I be concerned about fleas?

Fleas on your dog and in your home can cause intense discomfort, irritation and allergies in your dog, and bites and allergies in you. Fleas can also spread tapeworms to your dog.

Fleas breed in stupendous numbers and heavy infestation can build up in your home.

### How can I tell if my dog has fleas?

A heavy flea infestation shouldn't be hard to spot. You'll probably see your pet scratching or biting himself, or he may appear unsettled. If you run a fine metal flea comb through your pet's coat, you might see them crawling around on the comb afterwards – they are small black/ brown insects approximately 2-3 mm long.

Often though, you'll notice symptoms of irritation without being able to find the culprit. That's because pets will often groom fleas out of their coats long before you've had a chance to try and find out what's making them itch.

### The wet paper test

1. Put white paper towels on the floor under your dog and have your dog sit or lay down.
2. Vigorously scruff up and ruffle the hair on the neck, stomach area and the rump just above the tail.
3. Remove your dog and look for what looks like black pepper.
4. Carefully dampen the paper towel containing the specks. If each black speck becomes surrounded by a red/brown halo, your dog has fleas.
5. This black pepper-like substance is "flea dirt" (which is actually dried blood), left by fleas biting your dog.
6. If you detect flea dirt you can be certain that your dog has been in recent contact with fleas. Treatment is required.

### The flea lifecycle

Adult fleas on your pet account for only 5% of a flea population at any one time, the other 95% exist in the egg, larval and pupal life stages in your home.

Fleas feed on your dog's blood, and will produce 2000 eggs during its lifetime (a matter of days). These eggs fall off your dog and into carpets and floors. When the eggs hatch they develop into larvae and then pupae. Adult fleas emerge from these pupae when conditions are warm enough.

Adult fleas jump blindly in the direction of vibration, carbon dioxide and warmth trying to find a host. Once on you or your dog, they begin to feed and the lifecycle begins again, it can take as little as three weeks for a flea to hatch, feed and reproduce.

## Treatment

Regular flea treatment of your dog is the key to preventing an infestation in your home.

The traditional flea season was from April to October. However, in modern centrally-heated houses, fleas now reproduce all year round.

If you detect fleas it's important to treat all your animals and also your home to give the flea no chance to hide in any of its life-stages.

- Treat the fleas on your dog **AND**
- Treat the fleas in the house

## Treating your dog

Many flea products only kill the fleas on your dog for a few hours; after this time your dog can become re-infested as fleas in the environment jump back onto him.

For this reason, we don't recommend the use of many shampoos, sprays and powders available in the shops. Products must have a minimum duration of action of four weeks to break the complete three-week flea lifecycle – we recommend using:

- Advocate
- Stronghold
- Frontline
- Advantage
- Advantix

All these products kill 98-100% of fleas within 24 hours. Some also treat against worms, mites and ticks.

**Money saving tip:** *If you choose 'Advocate' as your pet's flea treatment – this also kills all worms that affect UK dogs except tapeworm. For a limited time in 2010 we will be giving free tapewormer (Droncit) with all sales of Advocate. This is the best value for money all-round parasite protection programme available.*

## Treating the house

We recommend Indorex, Staykil and Acclaim sprays for environmental control. Only these products contain sufficient concentrations of their active ingredient to kill larvae in your carpets.

In addition, we recommend the physical removal of eggs, larvae and pupae through daily vacuuming, especially in the areas that your dog lies the most, and laundry of your dog's bedding.