

## KITTEN & CAT FLEAS

Fleas on your kitten and in your home can cause intense skin irritation and allergies in your kitten, and bites and allergies in you. Fleas also act as an intermediate host for the tapeworm *Dipylidium Canis*.

### The flea lifecycle

Fleas feed on your cat's blood, and can produce 2000 eggs during its lifetime. These eggs fall off your cat 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 cat, they begin to feed and the lifecycle begins again.

### Does my cat have fleas?

Fleas can be seen in your cat's fur as small black/ brown insects approximately 2-3 mm long. If you can not see any fleas, even with a flea comb, the wet paper test can demonstrate the presence of flea dirt, and hence flea infestations.

### The wet paper test

1. Put white paper towels on the floor under your cat and have your cat sit or lay down.
2. Vigorously scruff up and ruffle the hair on the neck, stomach area and the rump just above the tail – taking care as your cat may not enjoy this part of the test!
3. Remove your cat 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 cat has fleas.
5. This black pepper-like substance is "flea dirt" (which is actually dried blood), left by fleas biting your cat.

### Treatment

In warm conditions, the flea lifecycle can complete in as little as three weeks. The traditional flea season was from April to October. However, in modern centrally-heated houses, fleas can reproduce all year round.

It's important to treat all your animals to give the flea no chance to hide in any of its life-stages and to do this you should:

- Treat the fleas on your cat **AND**
- Treat the fleas in the environment

## Treating your cat

Many flea products only kill the fleas on your cat for a few hours; after this time your cat 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 at least a four week duration of action to break the complete three week flea lifecycle – we recommend using:

- Advantage
- Frontline
- Stronghold
- Program/Capstar
- Frontline Combo
- Advocate

Advantage spot on is effective for four weeks, stops fleas biting in three to five minutes and kills 98 – 100% of fleas on your pet within 24 hours. Advantage is shed along with your cat's dead skin cells into your carpet where it also kills developing flea larvae.

Frontline lasts for eight weeks and is absorbed into the oils of your cat's coat. Frontline kills 98 – 100% of fleas on your pet within 24 hours of application; it's waterproof even with frequent bathing and is also effective against ticks. Frontline Combo has the added benefit of controlling flea larvae and pupae in the environment.

Stronghold is a spot on product that lasts for four weeks. It kills all fleas on your cat and is also effective against sarcoptic (fox) mites, ear mites and roundworms. As it kills fleas responsible for spreading tapeworms, Stronghold can be used as a complete de-flea/ wormer.

Program suspension or injection effectively sterilise the fleas on your cat and stops them reproducing. For this reason, Program is effective in preventing infestation, but is less useful in problem cases. They can be used with Capstar tablets which start to kill fleas within 30 minutes of ingestion. Program tablets are given once a month, the Capstar tablets being used if there is a flea infestation. A Program injection provides protection for six months.

Advocate spot on lasts for four weeks, kills 98 – 100% of fleas within 12 hours and stops fleas feeding within 3 -5 minutes. In addition, Advocate kills ear mites, roundworms, sarcoptic mange mites and especially important in cats travelling abroad on the PETS scheme, it is effective against heartworm.

## Treating the environment

We recommend Indorex, Staykil and Acclaim 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 vacuuming, especially in the areas that your cat lies the most, and laundry of your cat's bedding.