

## **SPRING INTO ACTION?**

Spring is at last around the corner and with it the longer evenings and a chance for our dogs to get some longer walks and our cats to leave their fire sides. Once they start spending more time outside the downside is they are more likely to pick up parasites such as ticks, mites and worms. However the most common of these is of course, that great survivor, the flea. We can spend hours, and pounds, de-fleaing our pets and the fleas can still come back.

However we can maximise our chances of getting rid of fleas on our pets by understanding how a flea lives and breeds. There are many types of flea. In fact most animals have their own variety of flea that lives on them. However dog and cat fleas can quite happily live on both dogs and cats and also feed and breed on both. Other types of flea may jump on our pets but cannot feed or breed on them so are not such a problem. Once our pet catches a dog or cat flea it will live for 10 days while it feeds by sucking blood as well as laying up to 200 eggs on our pets' coats. These eggs are very light, and will fly off when our pets shake, sending them flying across the room. Being too small to see they are difficult to detect. If it is warm, and our pet is near by, they will soon hatch out, and develop into another flea, hopping on next time our pet is passing. If it is cold, or our pet is away, they can stay dormant for up to a year without damage to themselves. Now those of you with a mathematical bias will quickly see, that in ideal conditions for fleas, that within a few weeks, the one flea your pet catches, can develop into 200x200x200 fleas, which are of course quite a lot! Your pet can soon become a walking flea campervan and your house a flea incubation unit!

**One does not burn a blanket to get rid of a flea. (Quote by - Turkish Proverb)**

Fortunately there are things you can do to stop the fleas spreading like this. You can use insecticides to kill fleas, flea hormones to stop fleas breeding and products to kill fleas and stop their eggs from hatching around the house. There are a whole armoury of insecticides available in spot on formulation, sprays etc. The important thing is to use a long acting formulation and to use it regularly. It is no use using a flea shampoo, that may kill the fleas on Fido during the bath, when he is

going to get a load more fleas jump on him from the environment as soon as he leaves the bathroom. The modern products, and your veterinary surgeon can advise you further, will carry on killing fleas for at least a month, so as soon as the new ones jump on they will start dying.

The household flea sprays will lower the number of fleas in the carpets, furnishings etc but nothing will kill them all. So spray, and spray again after a month, but remember it won't kill them all so there will always be more to jump back on your pet. Hence you must treat your pet regularly, ideally monthly, with a long acting insecticide to have any chance of controlling them.

Flea hormones can be given to your pet or sprayed onto the surroundings to stop the flea eggs hatching out which will certainly reduce the number of fleas. Again your veterinary surgeon can advise you on this.

### **The fatter the flea the leaner the dog. (Quote by - German Proverb)**

You can spot fleas on your pet by combing it and seeing the fleas themselves, or their droppings, which are, in fact, digested dried blood (see picture).



So before the spring gets too warm take control of the fleas on your pet and stop them in their tracks! Otherwise you may have more in your house than you would care to think of!

