All About Fleas – Natural Remedies – Inside and Out

Spring is here and here come the fleas.

When your cat or your dog starts scratching and little red bumps appear on your ankles and itch like crazy, a flea infestation is already underway. Although there are more than 2,500 types of fleas (with about 325 species in the U.S.), you are probably dealing with the cat flea, one of the peskiest creatures known to cats, dogs, or people.

Fleas can consume up to 15 times their weight in blood. They are so tiny, this doesn't seem like much, but a serious infestation can cause your pet to suffer from anemia (which could be life-threatening, especially for puppies or kittens) or to suffer from a mild to severe allergic response. Fur loss, chewed skin, scabs, and hot spots may result. Some animals exhibit a severe reaction to a single fleabite. Animals also swallow fleas, which can result in tapeworms.

Fleas are interesting little critters. These wingless, 6-legged monsters can jump 100 times their height and 10,000 times in a row, the entire length of a football field.

Cat fleas are not the type associated with plague or murine typhus; but rat fleas associated with these diseases can be found in the southwestern United States, so eradication of rodent infestation and their fleas is also important.

Life Cycle of a Flea

Adult females lay 25-40 eggs a day, up to 2,000 eggs in their lifetime. Though the eggs are laid on the host, they are not glued to the pet's hair. They fall off easily when the animal shakes, moves, or scratches. They hatch in two to five days

and enter stage one of three larval stages, which together last a total of seven-fourteen days. Pupae usually develop into adults within one or two weeks, but they can lie dormant in this stage until the vibration of an animal or human stimulates them. The typical warm weather life cycle for a flea is three to four weeks.

Cat fleas are also a problem for the farm, as they feed on livestock (especially cows and pigs) and chickens. Adult fleas survive the winter and begin their reproductive cycle as weather warms up in the spring and summer.

Conventional Treatment

Conventional treatment involves toxic ingredients – toxic to both animals and humans. Pest control companies spray their noxious sprays in and around our homes, we set off indoor bombs to fumigate, and we put toxic collars, sprays, powders, and treatments on our pets. Then we wonder why our animals develop cancer.

We may spend hundreds of dollars on treatments and see no discernable progress in eradicating an infestation before resorting to alternative, healthy ways to control fleas.

Alternative Treatments For Our Pets

Raw Food Diet

All health, for all animals, begins with diet. Just as a healthy diet is the basis for human health, a truly healthy diet is the basis for your pet’s health. If you want your pet to achieve optimum health and vitality, begin with an organic, raw diet. This one choice will eliminate most of your parasite problems. Parasites prefer unhealthy, malnourished animals. (To learn how to make your own cat or dog food, see the third link below.)

The addition of small amounts of garlic to raw food helps to repel fleas (but do not overdo garlic in animal food. Some say it will interfere with their red cell production). Diatomaceous earth will help eliminate parasites from the gut (remember ingested fleas can cause tapeworms to grow in the gut), omega 3 oils aid in skin health and sleek shiny fur, and total nutrition powder will boost nutrition.

Make sure to add a little oil-coconut oil is and omega 3 oil.

Essential Oils and Other Repellents

Peta suggests the following spray to repel fleas on dogs: "…add five drops each of tea tree oil, citronella oil, rosemary oil, peppermint oil, and eucalyptus oil to one cup of water, shake it, and put it in a spray bottle."

Another dog spray recipe follows:

Put 3 cloves of garlic, the peels from 1 orange and 1 grapefruit, 1 tablespoon of rosemary and 1 pint of water into a blender. Blend until liquefied, and then heat the concoction at a simmer for 20 minutes. Allow it to cool and strain. Put the liquid in a spray bottle and spray your pets before they go outside.

Cats don't do as well with essential oils. Lemon water or vinegar water sprayed on the skin or food grade diatomaceous earth used as a powder on the skin will do the trick.

To make lemon water, use one sliced up lemon to a pint of water. Bring it to a boil and let it sit in the pan overnight. To make vinegar water, just mix one part vinegar to three parts water.

Alternative treatment for the

indoors

Boric Acid is a long time standard, a powder that can be beaten into the carpets and sprinkled on the floor and other furnishings. Though it has been touted as a natural way to combat fleas and kill other insects, including roaches, it is not entirely non-toxic. It is best to use it in cracks and crevices where children and animals are not exposed.

The first line of defense indoors, is vacuuming and washing bedding. Vacuum, vacuum, vacuum. Place the used bag in a zip-locked plastic bag and freeze it. Re-use and refreeze until you seal it and throw it away.

Wash your pet’s bedding, daily if possible. If your pet sleeps with you, wash your bedding daily or as often as possible. Remember, up to 40 eggs from each adult female flea are falling off your pet each day.

You can sprinkle Diatomaceous earth on the carpets. Do take care not to inhale it and remove your animals from the area. Leave it on carpets for a few hours before vacuuming and use a mask. Do not use the variety that has been chemically treated for swimming pools. Peta suggests salt or borax can also be used. Just leave it on carpets for a day before vacuuming. These three substances help dry out larvae, thus killing them.

Outdoor Treatment

Diatomaceous earth can also be sprinkled around the perimeter of the house and any areas where you suspect or have seen fleas. You can also spray beneficial nematodes on lawns and around shrubs. They are safe for beneficial garden dwellers like ladybugs and earthworms, and they are non-toxic to children, and pets. They eat the fleas. Problem solved.

Conclusion

The best way to defeat fleas is to be proactive. Wash your animal’s bedding regularly and spray or powder your pet. If you had an infestation last year, treat the yard.

Learn how to make your own Total Nutrition Powder (great for you or your pet!).

Recommended Products:

- Diatomaceous Earth • Food Grade DE

Further Reading:

- *Natural Flea Remedies*
- *10 Common Houseplants That Are Harmful to Your Pets*
- *Indoor Gardens and Cats: Keeping Your Pets Out of Your Crops*
- *The Top 5 Worst Pet Food Ingredients*
- *Five Tips* to *Keeping Your Furry Friend Healthy and Well Fed*

Sources:

- *Fleas* – ASPCA
- *Fleas* – Purdue University
- *Boric Acid* – Beyond Pesticides
- *Flea Control: Safe Solutions* – Peta
- *5 Natural Ways to Prevent and Get Rid of Fleas on Cats* – Natural Roots