

## **FLEAS - Pest Control Advice**

### Description

- Adult fleas live exclusively as parasites of warm blooded animals, like cats, dogs and humans
- They will feed on a host which is not their first choice where circumstances dictate, most commonly cat or dog fleas can feed on humans
- Cat fleas are responsible for 75% of flea infestation.

### Life Cycle

The flea eggs 0.5 mm long are laid pearly white, oval and slightly sticky generally on the hair, bedding or clothing of the host. The threadlike larvae (1.5 mm) hatch in approximately a week and thrive in dark humid places. After 2-3 weeks and two moults they grow to 5mm long and spin their cocoons for pupation. Fleas formed in cocoons may 'overwinter' at this stage but otherwise emerge by the stimulation of vibration, usually of the host. This is why attacks sometimes take place when the premises have been left empty e.g. when a house is for sale, or the host returns from holiday! In favourable conditions the life cycle is normally completed in 4 weeks.

### Control Measures

In most cases infestation can be traced to pets and control measures for the pet are therefore of prime importance. Detailed advice on pets should be sought from veterinary practitioners.

Control measures will include both hygiene management of the premises and insecticidal control. Regular and specific cleaning is vital, particularly of bedding, carpets, cracks and crevices. Insecticidal control can be used to treat infested premises and flea specific insecticides can be obtained from pet shops, garden centre and hardware stores. If insecticides are used you should follow the instructions carefully.

### Treatment Advice

One of the most important things to understand when any treatment is carried out for fleas is the life cycle.

Here are some facts about fleas:-

- One flea can lay up to 25 eggs per day
- Fleas develop from egg to larvae to pupae in 18-26 days (depending on temperature)
- Fleas can only lay eggs after taking blood from the host animal

### Pet and House Management

This can help reduce any problems.

- Animal grooming – combing the pet with a comb will help to destroy the eggs
- Vacuuming the carpets and furniture will pick up eggs
- Cleaning the area where the pet's favourite sleeping place is.

Why you may have fleas and not have an animal

1. In the summer months fleas can survive outside and be carried into the house.
2. Visitors may have animals and transport fleas into your home.
3. You can visit other people with animals and transport fleas back to your house.
4. Moving into a property, you could inherit a flea problem from the previous occupier.

#### Advice following flea treatment

The floors of your property should be covered by a layer of insecticide which is odourless and invisible. It has a very good residual effect which means that it will continue to work for some time if left undisturbed. Adult fleas will be killed within a few days but the floor should not be vacuumed, swept or washed if possible for one week after treatment because there will still be eggs which will continue to hatch.

As the eggs hatch and develop, you might find fleas reappearing 7-10 days after treatment. This is quite normal and provided the insecticide remains in place, it will kill them. This is why it is important not to carry out cleaning which might remove the insecticide.

If you have a cat or dog at the premises, it should also be treated for fleas without delay using a veterinary recommended treatment. If you require further information on this, please consult your vet.

#### Causes of re-infestation

1. Vacuuming before one week period.
2. Bringing more fleas from other premises.
3. Not treating your pet or not following the product's instructions.

The Council's Environmental Services Division can deal with an infestation for a fee. An appointment can be booked by telephoning 01293 438000.