



Fleas have been a plague for ages—doesn't the worry over them ever go away? Nope. They continue to be problematic, mainly because they can quickly invade anywhere pets hang out. If you've seen adult fleas on your dog or cat, your house or yard is likely infested with much higher numbers of fleas in juvenile stages (i.e. eggs, larvae or pupae) that live unattached to your pet. These juvenile-stage fleas may survive for long periods—up to months—and without treatment, infestations can continue as long as pets or other animals are available as a food source for these biting bugs.

Flea infestation fallout

Several species of fleas can infest pets, but the most common one found on cats and dogs is the cat flea, *Ctenocephalides felis*. In addition to skin irritation, fleas can also cause anemia and, in certain situations, death—especially when young animals experience large infestations. Adding insult to irritation, fleas can spread multiple pathogens such as tapeworms, cat scratch fever bacteria and other bacterial diseases that can infect both pets and people.

Flea riders

Fleas may be brought into your house by cats allowed both indoors and outdoors or by visiting pets. Infestations that take root outside your house may be caused by stray or feral pets, including feral cat colonies and wildlife populations.

If an infested pet enters your house or yard, the flea riders can easily colonize your property with flea eggs, leading to eventual infestation of the pets within the house. So if one of your pets has fleas or if any flea life stage is found close to your house, all of your pets need to be treated and environmental control measures should be taken.

Getting back to flea-free

Environmental control consists of:

- > A thorough cleaning that involves repeated vacuuming of flooring, rugs and carpeting (and disposing of the vacuum bags as soon as possible once finished)
- > Washing and drying pet beds, rugs and toys
- > Using indoor and outdoor flea sprays, being sure to follow the manufacturer's directions (or you can hire a licensed exterminator).

As for your pets, you'll need to work with your veterinarian to kill the fleas they have now and prevent future fleas (keep in mind that your pet and your property will likely need more than one treatment). This will usually involve flea preventives and insecticides including foams, aerosols and liquids.

How to be flea-free from the get-go

Given how difficult it is to treat flea infestations, using monthly flea and tick preventives, ensuring your property is unattractive to wildlife (see dvm360.com/fleamagnet) and keeping cats indoors are simple but effective preventive measures that are well worth the effort.



If you've been **infested**

First: Don't panic. Follow these tips and talk to your veterinarian about how to handle a dreaded flea infestation.

If you started using flea medications after you discovered a flea infestation, you'll need to treat your house too. Why? Fleas can live for several months in your house and yard, and flea eggs can survive in your carpet, cushions, and drapes for years.

And your pet isn't the only one at risk: People can get irritating flea bites too. Ridding your home of these pests takes time and a concerted approach.

Here's what to do:

To get rid of housebound fleas, use professional flea foggers in each room and sprays for hard-to-reach spots. Clean the flea eggs out of your house by vacuuming several times a week, taping the vacuum bags shut, and throwing them away each time. Also clean your dog's favorite hangout spots and wash her bedding regularly.

If your dog spends time outdoors in a kennel, be sure to wash the bedding or discard old hay if you use it. Spray doghouses and kennels with an indoor flea spray, and let all treated areas dry before you let your pet outside.

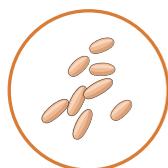
If your flea problem is recurring, you may need to treat your yard as well. Use professional, concentrated yard sprays for the outdoor fight. You can buy many that attach easily to the end of a garden hose for application.

It's especially important to spray moist and shaded areas of your yard. But be sure not to use any environmental treatments directly on your pet.

Ridding your pet and her environment of these hardy pests is a tough job, but you'll rest easier knowing that your dog doesn't have to endure the maddening itching and scratching or the insidious diseases these parasites can inflict.

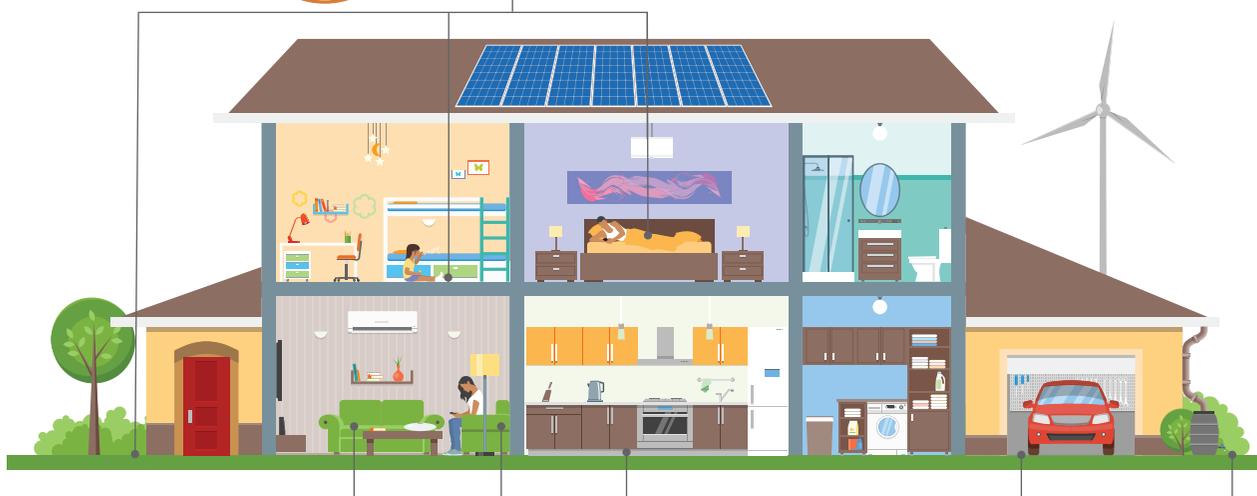
95% of fleas in your house aren't on your pet.

They're living in your home environment. Take a look at where these pests are hiding.



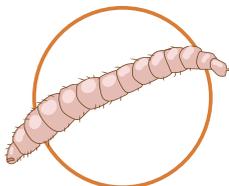
Flea eggs

Flea eggs are found in carpets, bedding, floorboards and soil.



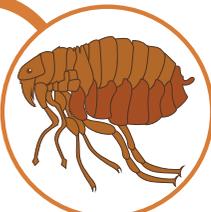
Inside, flea larvae and pupae are found in places where pets spend a lot of time, such as pet bedding, in carpets, on upholstered furniture, on bed covers and in other areas where pets hang out.

Flea larvae



Flea pupae

Outside, flea larvae and pupae live in moist, shaded soil beneath shrubs, as well as the soil between the joints of concrete walks and porches.



Flea adult

The adult fleas living on your pet make up about 5% of the fleas in your living environment. The rest are scattered throughout your home.

Removal tips

Inside the house

- > Vacuum and steam clean carpets
- > Pay special attention to places where pets spend a lot of time

Outside the house

- > Mow and rake, and remove organic debris from flowerbeds and under bushes