

# healthful pets

## Fleas & Natural Flea Control



**Have you considered Natural Flea Treatments for Dogs and Cats? Sourcing an effective and safe deterrent for your family pet is important for their overall comfort and for your peace-of-mind. There are now natural and non-toxic options for cats and dogs. Read about protecting your dog or cat from those annoying fleas with a natural alternative.**

One of the key factors in flea prevention is the overall health and immune system of your dog or cat to ensure fleas are kept to a minimum. However, on occasions, even healthy dogs and cats may become hosts to fleas.

Fleas can live in colder climates but they are most often found in temperatures between 65°F and 80°F and where there is higher humidity which greatly prolongs their survival time off the host. Only the adult flea will be found on your pet; the other life cycle stages live in the environment, which is why control needs a wider approach.

Fleas are highly productive and one female flea can lay up to 50 eggs a day, mostly in the environment though a few laid on your pet, being non-sticky, can will fall off in your home. Eggs hatch into the larval stage after two days to two weeks depending on temperature and humidity. Larvae live in crevices in floors, skirting boards, under carpets etc., feeding on dried organic matter and maturing in about a week to form the pupal stage which typically lasts up to two weeks but may extend to months in cold conditions. Thus, a new adult flea may emerge after three to six weeks in suitable environmental conditions but their life cycle can be as long as several months. In this way, they can survive the winter months outside, or indoors even if the home is not kept particularly warm, to cause re-infestation in the Spring and Summer.

Fleas not only cause itching but they are also transmit tapeworm. However just because your dog or cat isn't itching doesn't mean they don't have fleas. Small numbers may be cleared from the coat by the pet's self-grooming activities so you won't see adult fleas. Occasionally you see a tapeworm segment passed, more often by cats, which is an indication they have been clearing fleas from their coat

Natural methods of flea prevention can play a key role in helping your dog and cat with flea prevention and resisting fleas naturally.

## So what can you do?

1. These days, with houses centrally heated and disturbed weather patterns, there isn't really such a distinct "flea season". Check daily for fleas and ticks on the skin. Grooming regularly and diligently using a fine flea-comb to help find fleas in your pet's fur and skin. Standing your pet on a white sheet or paper towel will allow any "flea dirt" to show; this is dried flea faecal material which will have fallen from the coat. It forms small comma-shaped black specks and consists of ingested blood so you can tell it apart from other material by moistening it, when it will turn red.
2. Your dog's overall health plays a key role in flea prevention. Fleas are parasites and take advantage of the weak and unhealthy further compromising their condition. Very heavy flea infestations can lead to severe anaemia through the blood loss, and may overwhelm debilitated, very young or old animals, causing death. Offer a stress-free environment and support your pet's immunity by feeding a natural, high quality, species appropriate diet and by following a healthy lifestyle, to build up your pet's health and resistance. After all a good diet is the foundation of good health.
3. It simply isn't sufficient to think that by protecting your pet from fleas that that is the problem solved. Fleas love a warm home and will quickly multiply and contrary to popular belief fleas spend most of their time on carpets, upholstery, dog beds etc. Keep the home environment clean by ensuring floors are frequently vacuumed and your pet's bed linen and toys are washed frequently at a hot temperature and dry on maximum heat allowed by the material. Take care to choose suitable materials when buying bedding so that it can be washed at higher temperatures. Regular cleaning is important as it interrupts the life cycle of the flea. Remember to empty the vacuum cleaner in the dustbin outside. Steam cleaning at the correct temperature may be effective at killing flea eggs.
4. Bathe your dog regularly in a natural, non-toxic shampoo. Cats are not normally fans of a bath and groom themselves on a regular basis but if they don't mind then you could try it. You could use a natural flea-control shampoo, such as Dorwest Pennyroyal shampoo for dogs and cats, which contains pennyroyal mint which has a strong minty aroma to repel insects and mites. Wildwash have also introduced an Anti-Flea Shampoo for dogs from their Pro Range and Flea-Off shampoo for Dogs from their Pet Range. Ensure indoor pets are protected as fleas can be carried in on other pets, shoes, clothing etc. Adding natural repellent oils, such as Eucalyptus, to the final rinse for bedding may also be helpful.
5. Use natural flea and tick repellents on a regular basis (or as recommended) that contain natural ingredients and essential oils rather than toxic chemicals. Avoid chemical cleaners in the home which can all affect your pet's immune load. Many cats, in particular, develop Flea Allergy Dermatitis, which is generally a reaction to flea saliva and usually requires veterinary attention. Total flea control is then very important, especially repellent use; because products that kill the flea after it has bitten still allow aggravation to the host from the bite.

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*The content of this fact sheet is for general information and guidance only and is not intended to amount to advice on which you should rely. For individual situations, where there are concerns about conditions persisting or worsening, or suitability of products, pet owners or carers should seek veterinary advice or contact us at [hello@healthfulpets.co.uk](mailto:hello@healthfulpets.co.uk) to seek further advice from the manufacturers.*

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