

## FLEAS & TICKS and HOW to CONTROL THEM

Fortunately for our pets, pet owners now have more choices and more quality products than ever for controlling and eliminating fleas.

But before you try yet another new “miracle” flea product that you’ve heard about on TV or from a friend, it’s important to understand fleas and their life cycle in order to effectively treat them. First, realize that there are 4 parts to a flea’s life cycle:

- 1) **Adult Fleas** ... which lay ...
- 2) **Eggs** ... which hatch into a ...
- 3) **Larva** ... which spins itself into a ...
- 4) **Pupa / Cocoon** ... from which the Adult flea emerges to start the cycle all over

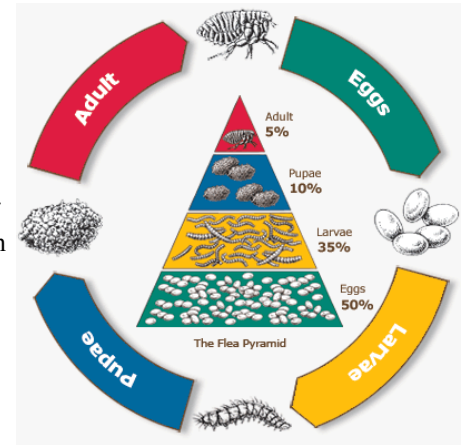
I know you must be thinking, “OK, Dr. Bob, why in the world should I care about the flea life cycle? What’s the big deal???” I just want to get rid of these doggone pesky fleas!”

How about if I told you that in a flea’s life cycle, only a very small percentage of time is spent in the adult flea stage. With ~95% of the time (see chart to the right) spent in the 3 other stages of development, wouldn’t it make sense to treat and eliminate the other parts of the life cycle to get firm control over the problem? You bet it would.

How will we do that? First, we have to start at the source.

By that, I mean that if possible, we want to aggressively eliminate fleas before they have a chance to jump on our pets in the first place. If you wait until fleas have already infested your dog or cat before you decide to attack the problem, then the workload of getting rid of fleas from the environment becomes much more difficult.

So where is this source of fleas? Simply step outside into your yard or neighborhood!



### STEP 1 - TREAT THE OUTDOOR PREMISES (The Yard)

Pets first pick up fleas outside, so if we target the areas where our pets spend time outdoors, we will solve a lot of the flea problems we see. Treating for fleas outside may not always be possible (for instance, if you live in an apartment complex, or if you live on several acres of land). And sometimes it’s just not a good idea at all (if you raise chickens, etc). But **if it’s possible, you must make an effort to eliminate fleas before they get onto your pet.**

I’ve had success with Spectracide’s Triazicide Insect Killer which comes in a liquid or granules, and is available at lawn & garden centers. Another product that we’ve been told that can be very useful is Gordon’s Horse & Pony Spray. It’s meant to be lightly wiped onto horses, but can be effective when lightly sprayed on the yard. **\*If you have outside cats, you must NOT use Gordon’s since it is very toxic to cats.\*** And absolutely the most important thing about treating the yard (listen up, Guys!) is to **READ DIRECTIONS** on the product label before applying. Be aware that there are a lot of products on that kill insects, but not all are effective vs. fleas. Choose wisely, and please, do not use Sevin Dust ~ it hasn’t been effective versus fleas for many years!

One other thing: be aware that fleas prefer shady yards more than a yard in full sun. So if you have lots of shade, you’ll need to be more aggressive with your treatment of the yard. And keeping the grass cut helps makes a difference, too.

### STEP 2 - TREAT INSIDE THE HOUSE

**The most important thing to know about treating the house is to treat 2 times. The 2nd treatment must be 2 to 3 weeks after the first treatment.** The reason for this goes back to the flea life cycle. While there are several products that kill fleas, flea eggs and flea larvae, there are no effective products that kill flea pupae (cocoon) since they are bundled up in a protective cover. So the 2nd treatment is necessary to kill the new fleas that have just emerged from the pupa.

To treat hardwood, tile or vinyl floors, vacuuming thoroughly can be effective. Carpeted areas and rugs need more attention, however. It’s important to **use a spray that you apply directly to infested areas.**

Before treating your home, put your vacuum cleaner to work. The vacuum will either suck up the flea pupae (with fleas still developing in them), or the *vibration* will actually stimulate adult fleas to hatch from the pupa / cocoon stage. Be sure to remove the vacuum cleaner bag and dispose of it in an airtight container outside of your home. If you have a bagless vacuum, empty the contents into an airtight container and put it in the garbage can outside, and then clean the container outside with soapy water.

Wait a couple of hours after vacuuming, then aggressively treat the house using a spray while going room-to-room to treat. It’s crucial to treat those hard-to-get-to areas; lift up sofa and chair cushions and spray thoroughly; spray under furniture; remove the sheets from beds and wash them, then spray around and under the bed thoroughly. You get the idea. While treating the house, it’s best to keep your pets in the kitchen or a utility room away from the spray.

**Wait 2 to 3 weeks, then repeat the treatment.**

For treating your house, I highly recommend **KnockOut Area Treatment** (\$20 - for fleas only) or **KnockOut E.S. Area Treatment** (\$22 - for both fleas & ticks). One canister will treat about 2000 sq ft of space. Used as directed and following my recommendations above (2 treatments applied 2 to 3 weeks apart), these products should effectively eliminate a problem in your house. We have both of these products available at our weekly events and on our On-Line Store. If you choose to order from us, go to the top of main page on our website [www.CarolinaValuePetCare.com](http://www.CarolinaValuePetCare.com), open the “CVPC STORE” tab to start the process.

But whatever you do ... **Do NOT rely on foggers/ flea bombs, unless** you are treating an empty (or nearly empty) room. Think about it. A fogger simply sprays a mist (fog) into the air. The mist from a fogger will only cover exposed surfaces. **It will not penetrate** into the areas where fleas, flea eggs and larvae will be. The mist from a fogger will land on the tops of furniture, beds, desks, dressers, chairs etc. But fleas and flea eggs aren’t on top of the furniture, beds, desks, etc, so why treat these areas?

### STEP 3 - TREAT YOUR PETS

With so many choices for treating our pets nowadays, how do you choose from all the available products ???

First, let's look at traditional methods:

- 1) Flea Sprays—can be messy; they're loaded with alcohol (which, of course, will sting if either you or your pet have sores on the skin); pets (especially cats) generally don't like them; and with a couple of exceptions, they only last an hour or two
- 2) Flea Shampoos—they're helpful to kill fleas and wash off flea eggs and larva, and help relieve your pet's skin, BUT when you rinse them off, you wash the insecticide down the drain ! Once your pet is dry, fleas will jump right back onto your pet
- 3) Flea Collars—The ONLY one worth considering is Seresto. Pricey but good. For Ticks, we carry Scalibor, good for 6 months

**Now, what about some of the newer products \*\*\* Understand that none of these are flea repellants, so fleas must get on your pet before they will die, and even then, they will not die immediately ! Be patient. And if at all possible, treat the premises.**

**1) Bravecto (Dogs Only)** - The newest (June 2014) weapon against fleas, this is a chewable pill that kills fleas and 3 species of ticks for **3 months** ! (and 2 months vs. Lone Star ticks). Perfect for dogs that are difficult to pill since it's given every 3 months ... not monthly. Bravecto starts killing fleas within 2 hours after being given. It's even FDA-approved for use in pregnant and nursing females ! Dogs must be at least 6 months of age and 4.4 lbs. The feedback from pet owners using Bravecto has been amazing.

**2) Activyl Topical Liquid (Dogs and Cats) ... Activyl TickPlus (Dogs only)** - This is the newest once-a-month topical liquid created for both dogs and cats. Its active ingredient is unlike any other product on the market (it is NOT at all similar to Frontline), so there is no known flea resistance. Dr. Michael Dryden, the world's leading authority on fleas, has repeatedly tested Activyl on a colony of 'super-fleas' that he created, and Activyl's effectiveness in killing these super-fleas was outstanding ! Pets should not be bathed a day before or a day after applying Activyl. Activyl is quite liquid and goes away fairly quickly once it is applied. For dogs only, we also offer **Activyl TickPlus** that combines flea control plus kills ticks. Because of the chemical ingredient to kill ticks, it will leave a more oily residue on your pet's fur than Activyl alone.

**3) Comfortis Tablets (Dogs and Cats)** - This once-a-month tablet does an excellent job of killing fleas, starting in only 30 minutes. It's a great choice for dogs that swim a lot, pets with persistent dry skin, or where pet owners are reluctant to apply the topical products because of young children in the house, etc. It does NOT kill ticks, or flea eggs or larva.

**4) Trifexis Tablets (Dogs only)** - Trifexis contains the same active ingredient as Comfortis to kill fleas, but has the added benefit of providing Heartworm prevention as well as treating and controlling 3 intestinal worms (Hookworms, Roundworms and Whipworms). It is given as a monthly pill. It is not labeled to kill ticks, or flea eggs or larva.

**5) Sentinel (Dogs Only)** - This once-a-month tablet combines heartworm prevention; treatment and control of whipworms, roundworms and hookworms; and prevents flea eggs from hatching. It does NOT kill adult fleas or ticks!

**6) Capstar (Dogs and Cats)** - For a fast and very effective way to kill fleas, Capstar can be a valuable product. And it's safe for both puppies & kittens. The big limitation is that it only works for ~24 hours (1 day).

**7) Revolution (Cats and Dogs)** - For Cats, we see great results with Revolution, another topical liquid. Additionally, Revolution prevents Heartworm disease and prevents Roundworms and Hookworms. And it even treats and controls Ear Mites. Revolution works by being absorbed into the skin to work inside the body, so we must avoid using it on cats that are in poor health.

**There are plenty of other flea products available, but most work very poorly. We have chosen what we believe to be the best of what's available for your pets. There is NO one BEST product out there. Each one has its benefits and limitations.**

### FLEA FAQ's

**What are the ideal conditions for fleas to thrive and reproduce ?**

For fleas to develop and reproduce, they require 3 conditions:

- 1) Humidity - That's a given here in the Carolinas throughout the summer and early autumn months
- 2) Heat (But not too much) - Fleas actually prefer temperatures that are in the mid- to upper-80's, not the 90's
- 3) Moisture - A crucial need for fleas is the right amount of rainfall. If the weather is really hot and really dry, our flea problems are not nearly as bad as when we have lots of mid-to-upper 80 degree days with occasional rain and storms.

**What is the peak season when fleas are at their worst ?**

Autumn ! Most pet owners think the flea season is at its peak in the summer months, but here in the Carolinas, the worst time of year for fleas is typically in September, October and into November. So don't stop treating for fleas until late in the year !

**When does the flea season begin ?**

Most years, we start seeing fleas in May, a few more in June and July, even more in August, and that all leads up to the usual busy Autumn season for fleas. Of course, we sometimes see pets with fleas year-round, if owners have not treated the house !

**When will the flea season end ?**

Fleas will continue to live outdoors until we get a hard, killing frost, which usually occurs between Halloween and Christmas. You'll know it's a killing frost when you see outdoor vegetation limp and lifeless following a hard freeze. Indoors, fleas can live year-round, although the low humidity in our homes in the winter months slows down their activity and reproduction.

**What about the tick season ?** We start seeing ticks as early as February, and they peak in June-July. Their numbers fall off quite a bit in August, and we seldom see ticks in the autumn months.