



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. However, too often, I talk with pet owners who are still using flea products that have been around

for many years and simply aren't working anymore.

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 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

So why is this important to understand? 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.

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 work of getting rid of fleas from the environment will take longer ... up to 3 months. So where is this source of fleas? Simply step outdoors ...

STEP 1 - TREAT THE OUTDOOR PREMISES (The Yard)

In the large majority of flea infestations, pets first pick up fleas outside, so if we target the areas where our pets spend time outdoors, we will solve a lot of our flea problems. 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). But if it's possible, you must make an effort to eliminate fleas before they get onto your pet. If there are no fleas in your yard, they shouldn't pick up new fleas unless they roam.

I currently recommend an insecticide Bifenthrin, found in **Ortho Home Defense** and **Talstar**. It comes in both a liquid (used with a sprayer) or granules. Check with your local lawn & garden centers. Once it dries, it is safe around pets. It is **very harmful to aquatic life** (fish, frogs, etc), so avoid use around ponds, outdoor water features, etc. Also, **Cy-Kick CS (Cyfluthrin)** is an excellent choice, but a little pricier. The absolute most important thing about using either product is to **READ DIRECTIONS** on the product label before applying. **Please do not waste your money with Sevin Dust** ~ my Dad was using it way back in the 1960's ~ it's been useless against fleas for many, many years.

Treat 2 to 3 times a year: especially in late April / early May and again in late August / early September.

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 treating the yard. And keeping the grass cut can help make a difference, too.

STEP 2 - TREAT INSIDE THE HOUSE

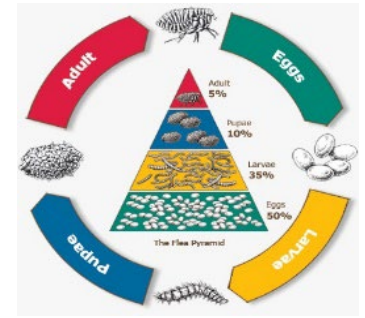
The most important thing to know about eliminating fleas from the house is to Vacuum ! Vacuum !! Vacuum !!! And do it everywhere, not just the floors. And it doesn't matter if you only have hardwood, vinyl or tile floors ! To treat hardwood, tile or vinyl floors, you **MUST** thoroughly vacuum along the edges of the walls, in the corners, and even the trays where sliding glass doors slide. Not surprisingly, carpeted areas and rugs need more attention. But you also **MUST** vacuum the furniture, beds ... if you see it, you need to vacuum it!

The second 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 several products 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.

For treating your house, I highly recommend **KnockOut Area Treatment** (safer around cats) or **KnockOut E.S. Area Treatment** (E.S. = Extra Strength). Both versions of KnockOut will kill adult fleas and prevent flea eggs from hatching, and they kill the flea larva as well. One canister treats about 2000 sq ft of space. Used as directed and following my advice above (2 treatments applied 2 to 3 weeks apart), these products should make a huge difference in your home. We have both of these products available at our weekend clinics and on our website. If you use the Knock-Out or Knock-Out E.S. sprays, before you treat your home, put your vacuum cleaner to work. The vacuum will either suck up the flea pupae (with fleas 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, dispose of the contents into an airtight container and put it in the trash outside. **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 ... spray around and under the bed thoroughly. You get the idea. While treating the house, be sure to keep your pets in the kitchen, outside, screened porch or in a utility room away from the spray until it dries.

Wait 2 to 3 weeks, then repeat the treatment.

Understand that **foggers/ flea bombs are virtually USELESS in nearly every household situation. The only time they may help is if you are treating an empty room.** Think about it. A fogger simply sprays a mist (fog) into the air. The mist from a fogger will then land on the tops of furniture, beds, desks, dressers, chairs etc. **It will not penetrate into the areas where fleas, flea eggs, and larvae will be.** Since fleas and flea eggs aren't on top of the furniture, beds, desks, etc, why treat these areas? So, use KnockOut to treat your house.



If you are unable or unwilling to vacuum and/or treat the house, then you MUST use BRAVECTO (1 dose) or SIMPARICA (3 doses ... given once a month for 3 months) !!! Also, YOU MUST TREAT EVERY PET IN THE HOUSE !!!

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:

- Flea Sprays—can be messy; they're loaded with alcohol (which, of course, will sting your pet if they 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 so
- Flea Shampoos—they can 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 in the area can jump right back onto your pet
- Flea Collars—The ONLY one worth considering is Seresto. Pricy but good. Seresto can also be effective against ticks. Be aware that in 2019, we starting seeing cases where it failed to work.

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 again, if at all possible, treat the premises.

1.Bravecto (Dogs & Cats) - Bravecto is available as a chewable pill or topical liquid (Dogs) and topical liquid (Cats) that kills fleas and 3 species of ticks for **3 months** ! (and 2 months vs. Lone Star ticks). There is also a **Bravecto for 1 month** that is safe for puppies. Bravecto starts killing fleas in ~2 hours after being given. It's also the ONLY flea product that is FDA-approved for use in pregnant and nursing females ! Pets must be a minimum weight (4.4 lbs for Dogs ... 2.2 lbs for Cats). **If I had to choose one product, this is it !**

2.Simparica or Simparica TRIO Tablets (Dogs Only) - Simparica is a once-a-month chewable tablet to treat both fleas and ticks in dogs. It begins killing fleas within 3 hours, and ticks within 8 hours. Simparica TRIO also provides heartworm protection.

3.Trifexis Tablets (Dogs only) - Trifexis contains an active ingredient 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 flea larva.

4.Sentinel Spectrum (Dogs Only) - This once-a-month tablet combines heartworm prevention; treatment + control of whips, rounds, hooks (and w/ Spectrum, tapeworms); and prevents flea eggs from hatching. It **does NOT kill adult fleas or ticks**.

5.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 works for ~24 hours ONLY (1 day).

6.Revolution Plus (Cats) - Revolution Plus topical Liquid for Cats is an excellent flea killer. Additionally, Revolution Plus prevents Heartworm disease, treats ear mites and prevents Round and Hookworms. It is also labeled to kill American Dog Ticks. Revolution works by being absorbed into the skin to work inside the body, so avoid using it on cats that are in poor health.

7.Parasedge Multi (Dogs) - A once-a-month topical liquid that is fairly effective against fleas. It also prevents heartworms, as well as treats / prevents Roundworms, Hookworms and Whipworms.

There are plenty of other flea products available, but most work very poorly. We offer 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 its limitations.

Do NOT Waste Your Money on Frontline ("Fipronil") and any generic version of Frontline. If you see the ingredient "Fipronil" on a label, put it back on the shelf and walk away. It's now 30 yr old product and virtually useless against fleas!-Cheap flea collars-Flea shampoos

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-80s, 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, November, and into December** depending on the weather. So don't stop treating for fleas until very 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, but only if owners have not treated their house.

When will the flea season end? Fleas will continue to live outdoors until we get a hard, killing frost, which usually occurs between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Indoors, fleas can live year-round, although the low humidity in our homes in the winter months slows down their activity.

What about the tick season? We start seeing ticks as early as February, and they usually peak in June-July. Their numbers fall off in late summer, but certain types of ticks that we find here in North Carolina continue to feed year-round.

What about using Diatomaceous Earth in the home? Two important points here: 1) it will not eliminate fleas and 2) more importantly, it can be a health hazard to both pets and people. It is made up of crystalline silica, which if used regularly, the 'dust' can cause permanent lung damage (silicosis) when inhaled. Be very cautious!