



# Fleas

and your pet



### **The Flea Epidemic**

Flea infestation is one of the most common health problems occurring in cats and dogs in the UK. In a recent survey, just under 60% of cats and 40% of dog owners had noticed fleas on their pets. Almost every dog and cat will become infested with fleas at some time during their life.

The flea season is traditionally thought to last from the end of April to the end of November. However fleas have become an all year round problem with centrally heated homes allowing them to breed throughout the year. We regularly see fleas on pets even at Christmas and New Year.

Adult fleas are tiny dark brown, wingless insects which can jump up to 165 times their own length and easily transmit by contact from one animal to another. Fleas need to feed on blood from either our pets or ourselves in order to survive and to breed. For young puppies and kittens this blood loss can be distressing and may even be life-threatening. In adult pets (and humans) the main problem is the flea bite, which leads to irritation and skin allergy problems. Fleas are also involved in the transmission of tapeworms.

Two main species of flea are found in the UK, the cat flea and the dog flea. The cat flea is by far the most common and is able to live and breed on both cats and dogs as well as to bite humans and other small pets. This means that the cat is often the main culprit of the flea problem when both cats and dogs are living in the same household.

Although adult fleas cause all the problems related to fleas, they represent only 5% of the total flea population. The other 95% consists of immature stages of the flea life cycle which infest the pets' environment (bedding, carpets, furniture, car seats, etc). The life cycle begins when the adult flea lays eggs in the coat of the pet. The eggs drop off into the environment and develop through immature larvae and pupal stages to form the next generation of adult fleas.



When it first emerges, the young adult flea immediately begins to search for a host and blood meal. After just one meal of blood the female becomes sexually mature and can start to lay eggs. A single flea can produce over 2,000 eggs in its lifetime!

## How to tell if your pet has fleas

Fleas are very small and are often hard to detect. When infestation is heavy, you may see fleas on close examination of the coat. The best way to check for fleas is to check for "flea dirt" which are brown/black specks seen in the pet's coat. These are composed of dried blood extracted by the flea.

You can do this by combing through your pet's coat onto a wet piece of kitchen roll or paper. If the specks turn red/brown, your pet has fleas.

## Treatment

BOTH your pets and their environment must be treated to eradicate any flea infestation.

## Treatment for your home

**Staykil:** This aerosol spray contains two main products. One kills any fleas or flea larvae for up to a month after application, while the other prevents hatching of the eggs and lasts for up to 12 months after application. This spray needs to be used in conjunction with thorough cleaning of the home.

## Treatment for dogs

**Advantage:** A spot-on that is easily applied to the back of the neck once monthly. It can be used on puppies over 8 weeks of age and overcomes the problem of pets which are frightened by sprays or aerosols.

**Frontline:** A non-aerosol pump action spray that can be used on puppies from 2 days old and lasts for up to 3 months after application. The spray adheres to the hair and is even effective after bathing.



**Program:** Oral tablets given monthly which can be used on puppies as soon as they are weaned.

**Stronghold:** A spot-on that is applied to the back of the neck once monthly. This product is also effective against some mites and worms. It can be used in puppies over 6 weeks old.

### Treatment for cats

**Advantage:** A spot-on that is easily applied to the back of the neck once monthly. It can be used on kittens over 8 weeks of age and overcomes the problem of pets which are frightened by sprays or aerosols.

**Frontline:** A non-aerosol pump action spray that can be used on kittens from 2 days of age and lasts for up to 2 months after application. The spray adheres to the hair and is even effective if your cat gets wet.

**Program:** Oral liquid given monthly which can be used on kittens as soon as they are weaned. There is also an injectable form available which lasts for 6 months.

**Stronghold:** A spot-on that is applied to the back of the neck once monthly. This product is also effective against some mites and worms. It can be used in kittens over 6 weeks old.

### Treatment for rabbits

**Advantage:** A spot-on that is easily applied to the back of the neck once monthly. It can be used on rabbits over 8 weeks of age and is the only product licensed for this species.

*For further information please ask at reception.*