

PRESCRIBED FLEA ERADICATION PROGRAM

An allergic reaction to a fleabite is **THE MOST COMMON** cause of skin disease (or a visit to a veterinary dermatologist) for dogs and cats. Period. For the flea allergic pet, 100% flea eradication (Zero Tolerance) is required for your pet to remain itch-free. If you have any questions after reading this handout, please do not hesitate to ask us. We want to work with you in conquering the flea so that you and your pet(s) will derive the maximum benefit and comfort possible.

“But Doctor, I never see fleas on my pet.” You may not see them, but that doesn’t mean they don’t bite your pet. Allergy is caused by your pet’s reaction to the flea saliva inside the skin (think mosquito bite, think ant ‘bite’/sting), and it only takes a few bites to jumpstart the allergy and cause your pet to act like it is getting bit *over and over* again, *even if* the flea has already died and left your pet. It is important to remember that **fleas do not survive on the allergic pet very long---but long enough** to do their damage and wreak havoc on your pet’s skin for an entire week *or more!* An itchy pet often scratches and bites so much that adult fleas are swallowed or removed, thus making them hard for you to find (not to mention that your pet’s hair coat makes finding a flea as likely as finding a needle in a haystack). The fact that your pet may get a fleabite does not make you a bad owner; it is the same as getting a mosquito bite...expected and annoying. Not only are fleas annoying, they transmit tapeworms & many dangerous bacteria (incl. Typhus, Bubonic Plague, & Bartonella which is associated with ‘Cat Scratch Disease’).

“If fleas are the problem, why is my pet still itchy in the winter?” Fleas thrive at 70-85% humidity and 65-85°F, making Florida winters or indoor environments a prime year-round flea survival locale. In warm climates or in our homes, fleas survive in low numbers year-round and we really won’t realize that they’re there because they do not prefer to bite us.

Successful flea eradication is only achieved by controlling fleas on your pet *and* in the environment. Wildlife [raccoon, opossum (can carry 10³ fleas), skunk, coyote, and fox] and feral cats carry fleas that drop eggs in areas where you or your pet visit. Birdseed feeders attract wildlife. After biting and obtaining a blood meal from your pet, the adult flea lays many eggs on your pet, which then fall into your pet’s (indoor or outdoor) environment. The eggs and immature fleas hide in furniture, carpeting, bedding, in cracks of flooring, under decks, and in piles of leaves or mulch, avoiding direct sunlight. Under perfect conditions, the flea life cycle can be completed, from the hatching of an egg to the laying of the next generation of eggs, in as little as 13 days, or delayed as a cocoon up to 12 months! Killing fleas in their cocoons is impossible and only achieved by severe flooding.

Because flea allergy is so common and complicates other allergies, we recommend that complete flea eradication be done in conjunction with other testing and treatments. Because fleas transmit serious diseases, year-round flea eradication should be maintained for ALL pets, most especially for allergic pets. Done properly, you can expect improvement in 3 months.

ON PET FLEA ERADICATION

It is important to realize that ***regardless of package directions, NO FLEA PRODUCT WORKS AT A HIGH LEVEL LONGER THAN 7-14 DAYS.*** While today’s flea preventatives do not prevent all fleabites, routine use will prevent flea infestations. **USING FLEA PREVENTION MONTHLY IS**

INADEQUATE FOR THE ALLERGIC PET and its housemates. Study after study has shown that **flea numbers increase on pets after day 7 of administration** although this will not be noticeable to the untrained eye. Numbers of fleas on the pet ARE NOT a good indication of the numbers of fleas (usually in their cocoons) in the house, yard, or in nearby areas. We realize that flea products are expensive and we do not make our recommendations lightly. **The comfort and health of your pet are our only concern.**

1. For the flea allergic dog: topical Activyl, Frontline Tritak, Vectra 3D, Advantage Multi -- every 1 to 2 weeks; Comfortis, Nexgard, or Trifexis tablets (not in conjunction with food trials) every 2 weeks; Capstar tablets every other day; Bravecto every 60 days; Adam's Flea Spray daily; or, if you can find it, 2% permethrin spray weekly. For flea allergic cats: Advantage Multi, Cheristin, Activyl, Tritak, or Comfortis tablets for Cats, every 2 weeks. For tick protection, use Preventic or Seresto collars for Dogs, Frontline Tritak, Frontline spray on dogs; topical Activyl, Vectra, or Frontline Tritak, or Seresto collar for cats.
2. Because they don't kill adult fleas, Program or Sentinel tablets can be used *as an addition*, but NOT as a sole agent, to the above and, because they are flavored, not in conjunction with food trials.
3. Which product is best for your pet depends on many factors including the number of pets in the household, whether they are indoor, outdoor or roam, as well as exposure to water, medicated baths and other untreated animals such as wildlife, stray dogs, and feral cats.
4. Remember that **one flea is too many for the flea allergic pet.** Flea repellents (2% permethrin spray) are ideal but generally unavailable and not safe for cats. Try NoNatz spray or wipes.
5. Aggressive flea eradication is often warranted at first, then tapering of flea eradication may be attempted, as long as your pet remains comfortable and not itchy. Use a **flea comb** on unaffected pets for 5 minutes daily or employ an intermittent-light flea trap to monitor success.

ENVIRONMENTAL FLEA ERADICATION

FOR THE HOUSE

Go to www.comfortisfordogs.com and watch "The Dirt on Fleas: An Educational Video". Unfortunately, not having carpeting in the home does not guarantee a flea-free home.

1. Vacuum prior to any treatment method; a vacuum with a beater bar is best.
2. Professional Exterminator Service
 - a. These tend to be less labor intensive but results vary; a good pest control operator will work with you to combat the flea problem. Let them know that you have a flea allergic pet. **Ask if they guarantee flea eradication** and find out what products/ ingredients they use and how they are applied.
 - b. If you have greater than 50% carpeting in your home, consider a service that embeds a borate-like compound into your carpets. Such companies often have 1 year service guarantees. Good-to-excellent results have been obtained with these services. An example of such a company is **FleaBusters (1-800-666-3532)**.
 - c. Other exterminator services will treat your home at regular intervals. At least initially, we recommend the use of a flea adulticide product along with an insect growth regulator (IGR) such as **methoprene (Precor) or pyriproxifen (Nylar)**. Discuss with your exterminator the time interval of treatments for your home.
3. Do It Yourself: (Follow label instructions carefully and heed label precautions!)
 - a. **Sodium polyborate** compounds--see 2b above or *20 Mule Team Borax*.
 - b. Concentrate under and in furniture, beds and closets and where pets frequent; don't

forget the entire carpet, welcome mats, second homes and campers! Take care with fish or birds in the home.

- c. Depending on the products used, treat your home annually with sodium polyborates.
- d. We recommend using IGRs such as methoprene (Precor) or pyriproxifen (Nylar). Consider the indoor use of an adulticide such as pyrethrin or permethrin (**Knockout ES Area Treatment®** is ideal).
- e. Sprays are recommended over foggers because foggers tend to go up and come down; however, they do not always get under furniture or in difficult to treat areas adequately.
- f. Intermittent-light flea traps may collect greater than 86% of live fleas in a carpeted room (10'x10').

FOR THE YARD

1. Professional exterminators or the do-it-yourself approach may be used. Be sure to ask what and how it is applied. Adulticides, such as **Virbac Yard Spray Concentrate®** or **Bayer Complete Insect**, can be used. Pick out flea larval habitats (i.e. 'flea hiding areas') and concentrate there (**under shaded areas** such as porches, trees and bushes, in areas with organic debris, around the home, and **where pets or stray animals frequent**).
2. Look for **feral and semi-feral cats and wildlife and close off areas** under the home where they could be seeking shelter.
3. Apply outdoor flea and tick products as directed every 3-4 weeks, depending on weather, especially rainfall.
4. Biological flea control using **beneficial nematodes** (*Steinernema carpocapsae*) is not effective because soil moisture content should be >20% while the flea prefers <10% moisture. <http://www.fleabusters.com/product/fleabusters-nematodes-1-million>

Top Ten Mistakes in Flea Eradication

1. Flea denial. ("My dog/cat doesn't have fleas." "My dog/cat has never been bitten by a flea.")
2. Waiting until seeing fleas before treating.
3. Treating just the dog, just the cat, only outdoor dogs or cats, not treating feral cats.
4. Inconsistent treatment (using flea products monthly or less often and not at the *prescribed* intervals).
5. Blaming the cat or dog's flea infestation on birds, rabbits, or squirrels.
6. Believing an over-the-counter flea collar, spot-on, or flea shampoo will keep fleas away.
7. Incorrectly using flea products or using flea products only in the summer.
8. Thinking dogs and cats do not need flea products if they are outside for only a few minutes or never outside at all.
9. Having unrealistic expectations of flea products.
10. Not identifying and eliminating flea "hiding places" in the home and in the yard.

****** PERSISTENCE is the KEY to the HEALTH of your pet.******

Precautions: Store pesticides out of the reach of children. Read all directions carefully as products can be dangerous or ineffective if too much or too little is used. Keep children, pets and their toys from the area until the pesticide is dry or as recommended on the label. Never transfer pesticides to other containers that children may associate with food or drink.