



FLEAS FACT SHEET

Fleas are a common problem for all dog breeds. For the greyhound industry, fleas can be particularly difficult to control where dogs are reared in outdoor pens with dirt floors.



Fleas can also be difficult to control in kennel environments where there are large numbers of dogs living closely together.

One flea can suck approximately 0.1mL of blood per day.

WHAT DO FLEAS AND THEIR EGGS LOOK LIKE?

Fleas are very small parasites, dark in colour, ranging from brown to reddish brown, and have larger bodies compared to their six legs. The side photo is an example of two fleas and flea eggs.

The eggs are a shade of white and almost see-through. The photo demonstrates the size of the eggs in comparison to the fleas. It is evident how small these eggs are so they may be easily missed.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY DOG GETS FLEAS?

The presence of adult fleas, or in most cases “flea dirt”, is diagnostic of flea exposure. “Flea dirt” is flea faeces, and is dark brown, round to comma-shaped and usually found close to the skin surface at the base of the hair shaft.

Fleas may cause:

- anaemia;
- skin irritation;
- transmission of some parasitic diseases.

In some cases, dogs can also be allergic to flea bites (flea saliva injected into the skin when they bite to allow them to suck blood). Flea-allergic dogs can have moderate to severe symptoms, even if fleas are not obvious because even an occasional flea bite can set off the itch-scratch cycle.

Symptoms include:

- hair loss;
- reddened, thickened and itchy skin.

LIFE CYCLE OF FLEAS

An adult female flea lays 30-50 eggs per day and these eggs fall off the dog onto the ground and can develop into adult fleas within 11 days in ideal circumstances. A flea on a dog can live for up to 110 days if not removed, killed or knocked off the dog.

HOW DO I TREAT FLEAS AND PREVENT THEM RETURNING?

Getting rid of fleas:

Treating fleas on your dog can be done simply by providing them with either an oral flea treatment or a topical treatment (such as an antiflea spot-on product, rinse or shampoo).

These treatments are available from most veterinarians, feed stores and pet stores.

However, because most of the lifecycle of the flea (eggs, hatching larvae and pupae) lives in the greyhound's environment, and not on their body, you must also treat the environment.

The flea larvae that hatched from the eggs do not like sunlight. They seek dark, humid areas such as soil, cracks in concrete and gaps in bedding structures. These areas need to be thoroughly cleaned and treated:

- Remove all bedding and bed materials, wash in warm soapy water and dry in the sun or in a tumble dryer on high heat;
- Vacuum all concrete/solid surface areas, paying particular attention to cracks; and
- Treat solid surfaces with a long acting insecticide or flea growth-regulator. This can be difficult in the on-farm/paddock situation where the area over which products need to be applied can be vast.

PREVENTING FLEA INFESTATIONS:

The most cost-effective method of preventing flea infestations is to apply flea treatment to your greyhounds regularly.

In some areas of the state this treatment can be seasonal, while in other areas (warmer areas) treatment must be applied year-round.

All flea treatments have different active ingredient(s). It is important that you know which active ingredient is used in the treatments you are giving your dog.

Fleas, like other pests and diseases can become adapted to a specific active ingredient making them resistant to the treatment you use. So, it is important to change your treatment every 1-2 years to one that contains a different active ingredient.

Daily cleaning of pens, and weekly washing of bedding will also help to reduce risk of flea infestation. Finally, a regular property pesticide management plan should also be established to give you the best possible prevention program.

WHEN/WHY SHOULD I SEEK ADVICE FROM MY VETERINARIAN?

- When greyhounds develop skin irritation from fleas or if flea treatments are not working.
- For advice on active ingredients and regular flea treatments.
- For advice on property pesticide management.



Top tips for preventing flea infestation:

1. **Clean housing and sleeping areas daily;**
2. **Wash bedding (and rugs etc) weekly;**
3. **Provide regular flea prevention treatment to your dogs;**
4. **Change flea prevention treatments (active ingredient) every 1-2 years;**
5. **Have a property pesticide management program to inhibit the flea life-cycle.**

