Managing a FLEA infestation

The flea life cycle is a tough thing to battle. Most people with flea issues find that fleas seem to keep coming in waves, again and again, making the fight nearly impossible. It isn't. We'll agree that it is hard, and it takes a lot of work, but you can end your flea problem once and for all by adjusting to the life cycle and striking from multiple angles.

Step 1: Treat the pet

We start with flea control on the pet because the pet is the blood source for the flea. Think of blood like fuel—without it, the fleas can't live. Pretty simple, right? The best flea protection available on the market comes in the form of veterinarian-recommended topical flea products. We have products in stock at our clinic that are easy to apply and affordable.

Step 2: Treat the environment

After treating every pet in the house, it's time to move on to the house itself. This is often the toughest part. The use of insecticidal foggers or "flea bombs" helps you remove fleas from the household. Unfortunately, you can't use foggers while people or animals—anything with a heartbeat—are in the house. Most pet owners set off the foggers after packing their pets into carriers and simply spend the afternoon in the back yard, weather permitting.

Note: Each insecticidal fogger on the market carries its own instructions and warnings. Read the entire label fully before using any products. Often electronics need to be covered with plastic. Make sure to pay attention to square footage requirements. You will most likely need multiple cans of fogger for your home to be properly treated. Don't leave out rooms that your pets

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don't enter. Fleas can go anywhere. That includes your basement, laundry room, bathrooms and even closets. Open your doors while fogging, then wash your clothing afterwards. Remember, the fleas could be in your clothing, too.

Once your living spaces are "bombed" with the foggers, open all the windows and let your house breathe. Vacuum all floor surfaces and empty the contents of the bag or container into a trash bag outside, then immediately dispose of this bag. Flea eggs can hatch in your vacuum cleaner, starting the life cycle all over again.

Repeat this process starting at the beginning after three weeks to fully resolve your situation.

Handout courtesy of Brent Dickinson, Dickinson-McNeill Veterinary Clinic, Chesterfield, N.J.