

Getting Flea Concerns Under Control for Homeowners

As both a veterinarian and a realtor, I understand the unique challenges fleas can pose, especially when selling or buying a home. Fleas can quickly become a significant issue if not properly addressed. Here is a guide to help you understand and control flea infestations effectively.

Understanding Fleas

Fleas are not a quick fix problem. It can take up to 3 months to get them under control, and you may still see some fleas during this period. Key facts about fleas include:

- **Life Stages:** Fleas have 4 life stages: Egg, Larva (maggot), Pupa (cocoon), and Adult.
- **Jumping Ability:** A flea can jump up to 7 inches high and 13 inches far.
- **Reproduction:** A female flea can lay about 50 eggs each day, totaling over 5,000 eggs in her lifetime.
- **Development:** It takes 4-6 weeks for a flea to become an adult.
- **Lifespan:** Depending on the environment, fleas can live from 3 months to several years.

Understanding Flea Infestation Growth

Let's analyze how a flea infestation can escalate quickly. A single flea feeds and lays approximately 50 eggs every 24 hours. Initially, you might not notice this one flea, but it's already active in your home. During the warm summer months, the flea life cycle can complete in just two weeks.

Without early detection, you won't notice the eggs, larvae (maggots), or pupae until they hatch into adults. Here's how quickly the situation can escalate:

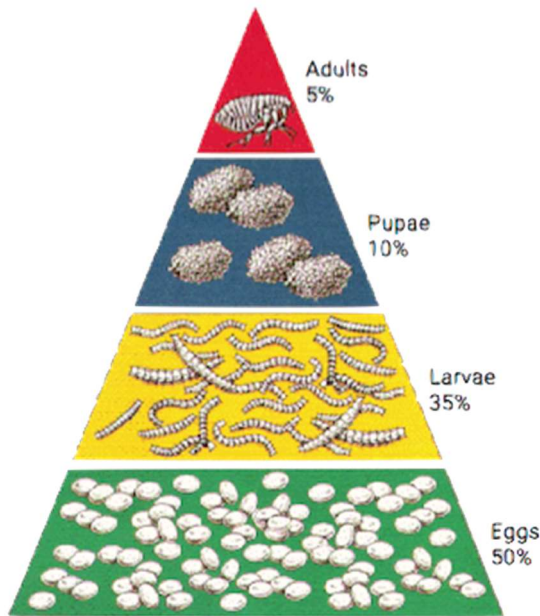


Photo courtesy of CatsExclusive.com

- Day 14: One flea laying 50 eggs per day results in 700 eggs after 14 days. By this time, many of these eggs have progressed to the larva and pupa stages, resulting in approximately 50 adult fleas.
- Day 30: Those 50 adult fleas can now lay 50 eggs each per day, leading to 35,700 eggs within 30 days. This results in around 2,551 adult fleas.

When you finally notice the fleas, you are likely somewhere between these two scenarios, facing a significant infestation.

Addressing the Underlying Issue

This image highlights the root of the flea problem that must be tackled. Each stage of the flea life cycle presents a larger issue, which is why it is crucial to break the cycle at every stage. To effectively resolve a flea problem, you must address each phase of the life cycle. If the cycle is not interrupted, more adults will emerge, and the infestation will continue.

The Flea Life Cycle

Understanding the flea life cycle is crucial for effective control. Here's a breakdown:

1. **Egg:** Flea eggs are laid on pets but fall off into your home and yard.
2. **Larva:** These maggots feed on various organic materials, including flea dirt and debris.

3. **Pupa:** Flea pupae are in cocoons and can be found in carpets, soil, and pet bedding, waiting for the right conditions to emerge as adults.
4. **Adult:** Adult fleas feed on blood and start laying eggs within 24 hours of their first meal.

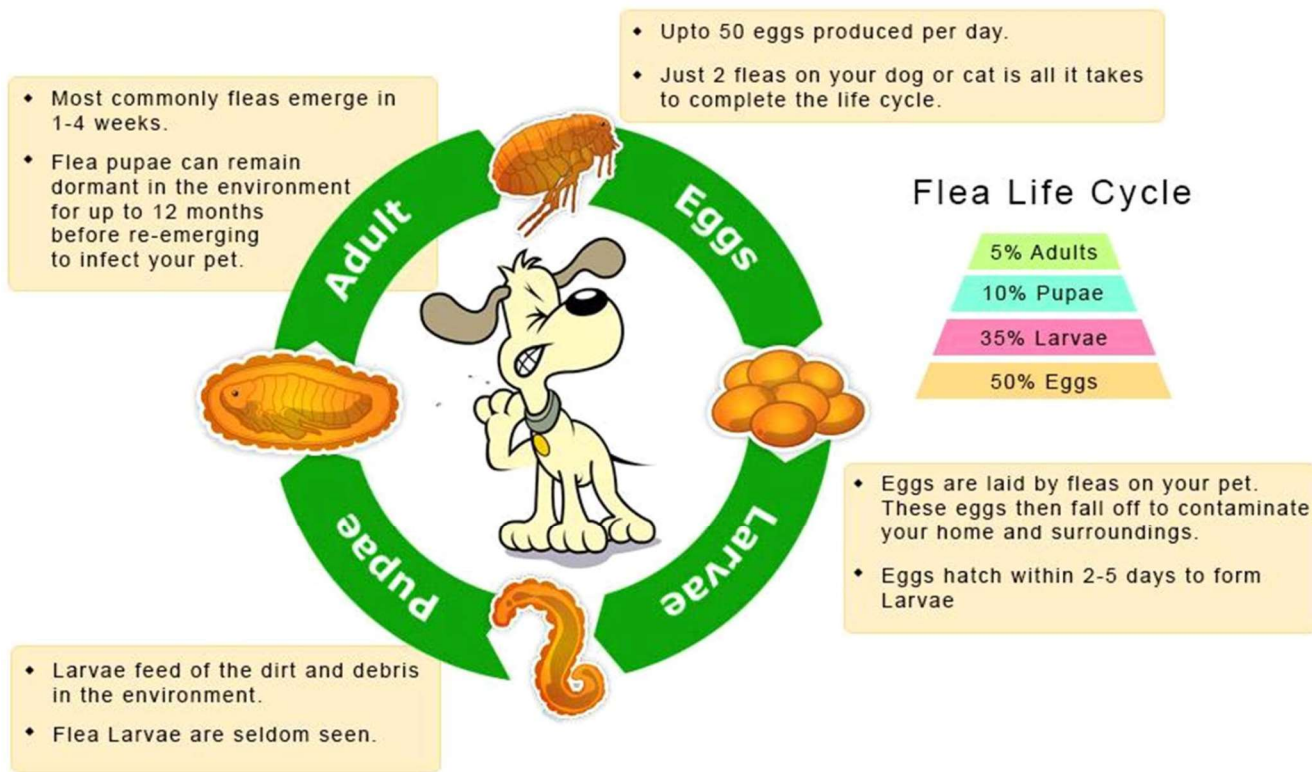


Photo courtesy of VetSupply.com

Addressing Flea Infestations

To homeowners, whether you're selling your property or have just moved into a new one, controlling fleas is essential for maintaining a clean and appealing home.

Step 1: Treat Your Pets

Flea problems are often worse in the summer due to the warm weather, which accelerates their life cycle. However, it's crucial to understand that the flea cycle continues as long as there is a single flea in any stage present in the environment. This is why year-round flea prevention is essential, particularly in warm climates like Louisiana.

Talk to your veterinarian about the products that are best for your pet. Remember, when using topical treatments on your pets, wait 3 days before bathing your pet and use soap-free shampoo to maintain effectiveness of the flea product.

Step 2: Treat Your Home and Yard

Fleas can infest carpets, pet beds, furniture, and yards. Here's how to treat these areas:

- **Indoors:**
 - Vacuum carpets daily.
 - Wash pet bedding and area rugs.
 - Use insecticides specifically designed for indoor use, such as [Virbac Knockout ES Area Treatment Carpet Spray](#) (#ad) and [Virbac Knockout Room and Area Fogger](#) (#ad), which kill

fleas at various life stages and prevent reinfestation for months. Additional home insecticidal sprays that may be beneficial include [Ortho Home Defense Max Indoor Insect Barrier](#) (#ad).

- **Outdoors:**
 - Treat your yard with appropriate products available at local hardware stores or through pest control specialists, such as [Cutter Backyard Bug Control Spray](#) (#ad).

Addressing Fleas When Selling or Buying a Home

For Sellers: Ensuring your home is flea-free can make it more attractive to buyers. Thoroughly treat your home and pets to prevent any signs of infestation during showings.

For Buyers: If you suspect a flea issue from the previous homeowner's pets, start treatment immediately upon moving in. Treat your new home and pets simultaneously to avoid bringing fleas into the environment.

Additional Resources

For more detailed information, visit:

- [Fleas: Know Your Enemy](#)

Conclusion

As both a veterinarian and a realtor, I recommend a comprehensive approach to flea control to ensure a clean, healthy living environment. By understanding the flea life cycle and using the right products, you can effectively manage and prevent flea infestations in your home.

I hope this helps you understand and address any flea concerns you may have.

Cynthia Benbow, DVM, Realtor

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