

## The Never Ending Problem...FLEAS

If your dog to cat is itching and scratching, fleas are a likely culprit. Flea season usually begins in spring and lasts through early fall, but here in Western Oregon fleas tend to be an issue all year round due to our moderate climate.

Flea bites can cause local skin irritation and swelling that may cause your pet discomfort. Some dogs and cats develop an allergic reaction to flea bites, resulting in scratching, which can lead to hair loss or to bacterial skin infections known as “hot spots”. Fleas can host tapeworms and can transmit bacteria, viruses, and protozoa.

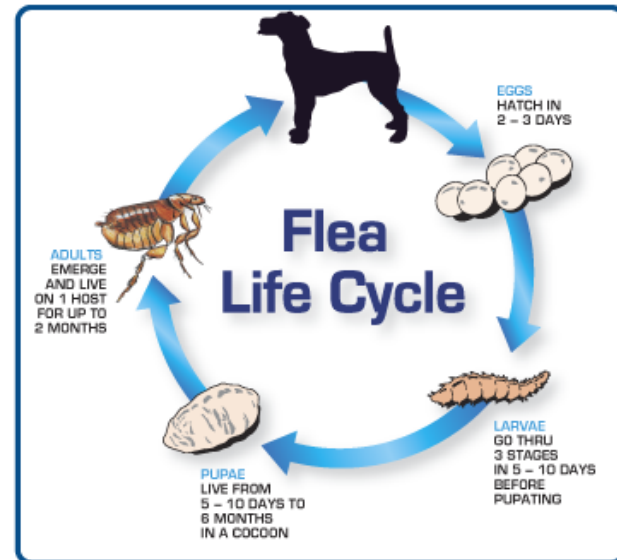
Fleas that live on your pet can also infect opossums and raccoons, which can be important courses of flea infestation outdoors. Therefore it is important to treat both your pet and your pet’s environment.



### Flea Life Cycle

Depending on the climate and the availability of a host, the length of the flea’s life cycle is variable. The female flea can lay up to 2,000 eggs in her lifetime. The flea eggs fall off a pet, which acts as a “living salt shaker”. Between 1 and 10 days later, the eggs will hatch into larvae in the environment. Larvae live anywhere from 5 to 11 days before they become pupae.

Pupae are difficult to eliminate, as you must wait for them to develop into adults before treatment will be effective. This stage is resistant to extreme environmental conditions, as well as chemical interventions that may be applied to the environment. It may take anywhere from 7 to 14 days for the pupae to develop into an adult flea; however, their emergence is largely dependent on the heat, humidity, physical stimulation, and carbon dioxide from exhaled breath. Depending on these external factors, the pupae may not “hatch” from their cocoon for 180 days or longer!



Once they emerge, an adult flea may live on a host up to 120 days. Fleas rarely jump from host to host. During peak flea season, the life cycle is about 3 weeks. At any given time, less than 5% of the flea population is adults, so it’s important to not only treat you pet, but also your home and yard for all stages of the flea life cycle.

- Adult fleas only account for 5% of the total flea population.
- The other 95% are the eggs, larvae and pupae that remain hidden in carpets, furniture, dog bedding and the garden, waiting to develop and jump onto the dog.



## **Signs of Infestation**

- Adult fleas on your pet's skin or in your house
- Flea excrement (aka flea dirt) on your pet. Appear as dark specks that turn reddish in water.
- Irritated skin or excessive itching → leads to hair loss, bacterial skin infections, and worn teeth.



## **Treating Your Pet**

There are several treatment options, including:

### **Adulticides**

An adulticide, such as a topical monthly use product, is applied directly to the pet's skin where it is toxic to adult fleas, providing quick relief. Some oral tablets can be administered up to once a day or once a month.

### **Insect Growth Regulator (IGR) & Insect Development Inhibitor (IDI)**

An Insect Growth Regulator (IGR) is found in combination with some topical adulticides. IGRs do not kill fleas but do kill eggs and larvae to break the flea life cycle. An Insect Developmental Inhibitor (IDI) can be administered orally on a monthly bases or every 6 months by injection. An IDI keeps flea larvae from maturing to the next life cycle. If you are experiencing an infestation, your veterinarian may suggest using both an adulticide and with an IGR or an IDI. This is called Integrated Flea Control and serves to rid your home of an infestation more rapidly.

### **Flea shampoo, dip, spray, combing, collar**

These can be effective temporarily, but generally do not yield lasting results.

## **Treating Your Pet's Environment**

Treating your house, garage, yard and kennel is another important step in controlling fleas. For best results, treat your living areas and yard on the same day that you treat your pet.

“Critter proof” your yard by identifying sites in the yard that pets and wildlife may use as shelter. These include crawl spaces, areas under deck, porches, stairs, shrubs, or trees. Prevent access to any of these areas if possible. This is much more effective long term, rather than trying to treat the outdoors, as these treatments only address 5% of the flea population or the “tip of the iceberg”.

Regular vacuuming and steam cleaning helps remove flea eggs, larvae, and pupae. Don't forget to dispose of the vacuum bag, as fleas can hatch in the bag after vacuuming.

A self-directed spray that will kill flea eggs and larvae in addition to adult fleas is the best choice for treating your house, garage, yard, and kennel.

If you must treat your yard, a pet friendly lawn granule application that will kill flea eggs and larvae in addition to adults is best.

## Myrtle Veterinary Hospital

Foggers aren't able to treat underneath objects that fleas love to inhabit, such as couches, so it's best to use a spray to reach under those items.

### **A Warning to Cat Owners – Use Flea and Tick Products Safely**

- Flea treatments meant for dogs can be deadly if given to cats instead. It is important to use only flea and tick products that are specifically designed for cats and administer the proper dosage.
- NEVER apply 45-5% permethrin "spot on" products to cats, even in small amounts. Highly concentrated permethrin can be extremely toxic to cats
- If you have both dogs and cats in your household, you should be aware that using a permethrin topical product on your dog may cause illness in a household cat.
- All flea/tick topical "spot on" products even ones with nearly identical brand names are not alike. Check the label to identify the active ingredient before you apply it. Carefully follow all pesticide label instructions.
- Ask your veterinarian if you have questions about the use of any flea control products.

### **Products We Offer At Myrtle Veterinary Hospital**

**NexGard** – a monthly beef-flavored chewable tablet for dogs only. It's fast-acting and long-lasting that kills fleas before they can lay eggs and also kills the American dog tick.

**BRAVECTO** - a easy tasty chew that protects your dog against fleas and ticks nearly 3 times longer than any monthly treatment.

- Treatment of flea infestations and kills adult fleas
- Treatment and control of ear mite infestations
- Treatment and control of hookworms and roundworms
- Prevention of heartworm disease.

**Frontline spray** – Topical spray used to treat and control fleas, ticks, and chewing lice in puppies and kittens 8 weeks of age or older. Also aids in the control of sarcoptic mange infestations in dogs.