



Animal Alternatives Holistic Health Clinic
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Fleas – Destruction and Prevention

The Life Cycle and Habits of the Flea

or

Know Thyne Enemy

In order to prevent fleas, or eliminate fleas that are already present, it is helpful to know a bit about their life cycle and habits.

The flea life cycle consists of four stages of varying lengths: the **egg**, the **larvae**, the **pupa** (or **cocoon**) and the **adult flea**.

The **eggs** are a little smaller than a grain of sand and hatch in 1.5 to 6 days depending on the temperature and humidity. They can be deposited anywhere your pet goes but are most concentrated in your pet's bedding and favorite hangout spots.

The **larvae** are what hatch out of the flea eggs; they also like to hang out where your pet does with the added preference for places that are dark and slightly damp as low humidity is detrimental to their survival. They feed primarily on the feces of the adult fleas or "flea dirt." The larval stage lasts from 6 to 36 days depending on conditions.

The next stage is what makes it so difficult to get rid of fleas – the **pupa** or **cocoon** stage. While the flea completes its development in 7 to 10 days it can remain dormant in its **cocoon** for **YEARS**. (Eek!) They hatch when the temperature and humidity are hospitable and/or when they feel the vibrations of a passing host.

(Here's something else really terrifying and gross – the adult fleas, the ones you see, account for only 1% of the flea population.)

Destruction

To get rid of fleas you must treat both your pets and the environment. And when we say pets we mean all of the pets, even the cat that never goes outside can 'catch' fleas from the dog that does. Also keep in mind that it is possible for you to bring fleas in to your home on your clothing so your indoor cat can get them that way as well.

Use a good topical flea prevention (Advantage, Frontline, Revolution – NOT something from Wal-Mart!) to treat your pets and something like Fleabusters to treat the inside and outside of your house.

Vacuum all carpeted areas and throw out the bags – the vibrations from the vacuum will cause those fleas in the pupa stage to emerge. It's not a bad idea to use a powder or other pesticide inside the vacuum bag. Wash in very hot water, or throw out, your pet's bedding.



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Prevention

So, now that you've gotten rid of the fleas you certainly don't want them coming back, right? Fortunately preventing them is (somewhat) easier than getting rid of them. Regular use of a good topical flea preventative as mentioned above on all of your pets along with periodic treatment of your yard and home should keep the little buggers at bay.

Good Luck!