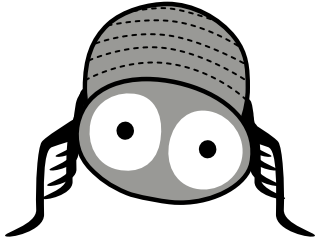


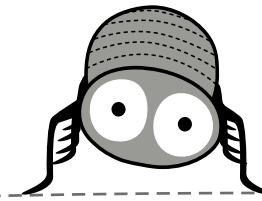


# Dogs and Fleas

Advice For Your Pet



# Dogs and Fleas



## Article Features

- What are fleas
- Fleas and your pet
- How to prevent fleas
- How to spot the symptoms
- How to respond to them

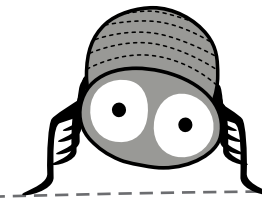
When you get a dog, making sure they are fit, healthy and happy is incredibly important. This means regular trips to a vet to check for any injuries, infections or parasites that could be causing discomfort, as well as a strong focus on preventative treatments for more common issues your dog can face throughout its life.

Fleas can be easy to prevent, though quite difficult to respond to - which is why as an owner, you'll need to be extra-vigilant. You see, while dogs are pretty good at showing you that they aren't 100 per cent, when it comes to fleas, some pets have a greater tolerance than others and so may be suffering in silence without a keen eye on their health.

This guide covers everything you need to know about dogs and fleas: what they are, how to prevent them, how to spot the symptoms and how to respond to them.



# What Are Fleas?



There are two types of flea that can affect dogs, though both are very similar in appearance. The most prevalent, rather ironically, is the cat flea: *Ctenocephalides felis*. They measure between 1-2mm long, and are parasitic insects that will infest a dog's coat, feeding on their blood before quickly reproducing and laying eggs on their body.



Despite their lack of wings, the cat flea has long hind legs that allow them to jump high and move quickly. Coupled with the fact their incredibly tough shells prevent dogs from squashing them when they scratch, they can be tricky to get rid of.

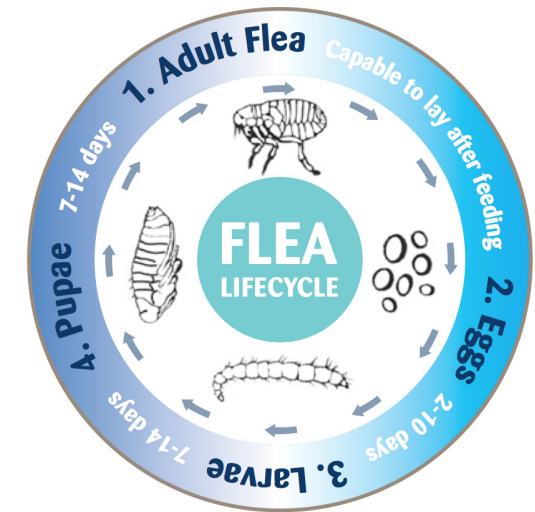
The other type of flea known to affect dogs - though one that is less common - is *Ctenocephalides canis*, also known as the dog flea. Dog-only households can be hit by these fleas, and unlike their cat flea cousins, they do not live on cats.

If your dog becomes affected by fleas, it can be very uncomfortable for them, and if untreated they can spread to other areas of your home too. While they don't live on people, dog fleas will feed on adults and children if given the chance.

## Where They Come From

Dogs pick up fleas from outside the home, and are especially susceptible if they visit the home of or - come in close contact with - another infected animal, or in long grass or woodland. This is because fleas can jump from one animal to another with ease, and begin laying eggs immediately.

Flea eggs can also be contracted from bedding, soil, carpets or floorboards. Flea eggs are extremely durable, and can lay dormant for months at a time. As a result, it's advisable to check for signs of fleas when buying an empty or neglected home. Barns attached to rural properties are also great breeding grounds for fleas.

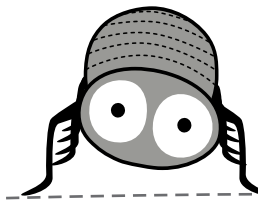


## Their Life Cycle

Fleas begin their lives as eggs, laid in batches of around 20 a time primarily on the body of a dog, though these can fall off onto bedding, carpets or a sofa. A period of between two days to two weeks will pass before a worm-like larvae will hatch, feeding on any organic material it can find nearby. While in this stage of their lifecycle, fleas will avoid brightly lit areas of your home and will seek out dark places to hide.

After one or two weeks have passed, the larvae will weave a cocoon similar to that of a butterfly, and spend a week pupating before hatching as an adult. They will immediately try to find a meal of blood and then the cycle begins again.

# Fleas and Your Pet



Even if you are very vigilant with preventing your dog from coming into contact with other animals while out on walks, they can still pick up fleas from other sources. You can even bring them into your home on your shoes. Some dogs are good at hiding mild infestations, so carry out regular checks when possible.

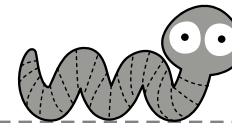
## Why do they pose a threat to your dog?

Other than the itching and irritation, fleas can also cause your dog other forms of discomfort. Flea larvae can feed on tapeworm eggs, thus making the flea a carrier of the parasite. As your dog grooms, it can ingest the parasite and become infected itself. The tapeworm will attach itself to the wall of the dog's intestine, before shedding eggs that pass through and out its body to be eaten by more larvae, thus continuing the cycle. Therefore any dog treated for fleas should also be checked for tapeworms.



As well as the risks to your pets, fleas will sometimes feed on human members of your household, including children. While dog fleas can't live on humans, they can still bite you and cause itching.

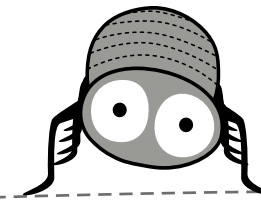
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Some dogs are allergic to flea's saliva, which can lead to skin diseases and painful itching. Instead of receiving small 'bug bites', they will develop dermatitis that cause severe discomfort and - when your dog itches and bites at the spot - can lead to infection. Severe infestation can also cause anaemia, which can cause lethargy and loss of appetite.



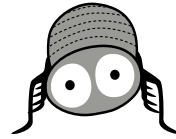
# How to Prevent Fleas



As the old saying goes, prevention is better than the cure, and fleas are no exception. After all, these parasites are very difficult to get rid of once they've settled in, so taking precautions will save you time and effort - and protect the health of your dog.

Regularly treating your pet for fleas with a licensed flea treatment is your best bet; simply talking to a Flea & Worm Advisor from Pets at Home will help you in your quest. Much like vets, they can recommend and dispense products like Frontline, which comes in easy to apply "spot-on" solution forms. They are able to weigh your dog in-store to ensure the correct treatment is prescribed. These treatments will vary in lengths of time between each application, though it's usually once every five weeks.

Talking to a Flea & Worm Advisor from Pets at Home will help you in your quest to battle fleas!



Vacuum regularly!

You can also reduce the chance of fleas establishing themselves in your home by vacuuming regularly, which helps to catch eggs and larvae, and washing your pet's bedding above 60 degrees centigrade.

## Stopping a repeat problem in your home

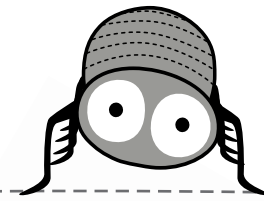
Unfortunately, stopping the resurgence of fleas is not confined to treating the dog itself. As mentioned earlier in this guide, flea eggs can lie dormant for months at a time, so a vigorous clean of your home is needed to ensure they are gone for good. Although regular vacuuming can rid your home of some of the eggs, a

household insecticide spray is necessary to make sure you get them all.

Before using insecticide, ensure that all pet food and water dishes, toys and clothing have been removed from the area to be treated. It is also necessary for all people and pets to vacate the area for a few hours - this can differ from product to product, so check the manufacturer's instructions before proceeding.

While you don't want to come into contact with it yourself, it is still important to apply special insecticides to all areas that might be home to insects or larvae, including rugs, carpets and any nooks or dark spaces behind furniture; the Pets at Home Flea Fighters team will advise you on which products are the best to choose. To be extra safe, it may be best to replace your pet's bedding and buy something new. Be sure to vacuum every day for a week or so after this treatment to catch any survivors, too.

# How to Spot the Symptoms



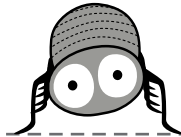
While it can be difficult to tell if your dog has fleas, mild infestations can be detected by close examination of their fur and bedding. We obviously recommend regular preventative treatment as the most effective way to stop a full-scale infestation before it's even started, though it's just as important to know the warning signs too!

## Warning signs your dog has fleas

Obviously, incessant scratching is the most obvious way to tell that a dog has fleas, although some dogs may be able to cope with mild infestations without needing to scratch. Similarly, dogs can scratch without actually having fleas.

Fur loss and sore patches and small, pepper-like specks (flea dirt) in your dog's fur are all warning signs of a flea infestation. You may even get bites yourself around your ankles and legs. If you notice any of these warning signs, further investigation is needed to determine whether or not your dog actually has fleas.

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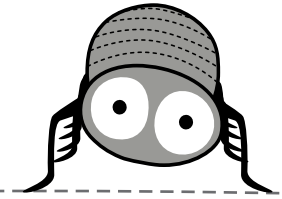


## Tests you can run to check for fleas

The most effective way to confirm the existence of a flea infestation is to run a special fine-toothed comb through your dog's coat. After doing this, hold the comb over a white surface such as a piece of kitchen roll so you can easily spot any fleas or flea dirt that has been deposited. As flea dirt is essentially dried blood, adding a few drops of water to the paper should turn the dirt a reddish-brown. If you find this, it's likely your dog has fleas.

You can also inspect the skin under your dog's fur. Any reddish bumps are a good sign of the presence of fleas, particularly if your dog is allergic. Also check your dog's bedding for eggs, as they are usually deposited in warm and humid places.

# How You Can Treat Your Pet

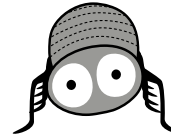


Thankfully, there are a variety of anti-flea treatments available to help you rid your dog of these pests - both from your local Pets at Home store, or through a prescription from your vet. In all cases, it is necessary to regularly treat and routinely check your dog to prevent them getting fleas in the future.

## Over-the-counter treatments

If you plan on buying over-the-counter treatments, then it's important you buy a product designed especially for dogs, as treatments designed for cats could be toxic, or may not be effective. If you have any doubt or are treating a young pup, best practice is to consult one of our experts in your nearest Pets at Home store or your vet.

Mild flea shampoos are a good first step to rid your pet's body of pests.



If your dog is happy having a bath, then mild flea shampoos are a good first step to rid your pet's body of pests, though these may not be as effective as spot-on or tablet-based treatments. Other short-term solutions to protect against returning parasites include flea powders.

## Prescription treatments

For more effective remedies to rid your dog of these parasites or a particularly bad reaction to the fleas, a trip to your vet is in order. However, you may be able to save time and money by speaking to our Flea Fighters team from Pets at Home first.

Prescription treatments, usually available in the form "spot on" treatments that come in a pipette, can usually kill fleas within 24 hours, as well as providing ongoing protection for up to a month afterwards. Be sure to follow all advice given to you by your vet to the letter.

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