

Flea Control Information Sheet

Think of flea control as a triangle with each side of the triangle represented by:

- a. your pets
- b. Inside the house environment
- c. Outside or yard environment

If you treat only one or two sides of the triangle, the fleas can move to the untreated areas until it is safe to move back.

Step 1: All pets in the household should be treated with an appropriate monthly flea preventive. This breaks the flea life-cycle, preventing the fleas from being able to reproduce and perpetuate the problem. Read the application instructions and follow them carefully. The following products are effective:

- Adulticides (kill adult fleas): Frontline, Revolution, Comfortis, Advantage, Advantix. Given once a month. In cats, Revolution also protects against heartworm and intestinal worms.
- Growth regulators (kill flea eggs): Program or Sentinel. Program is available as a monthly tablet, or in cats is also available as an injection given every 6 months. In dogs, Sentinel also protects against heartworm and intestinal worms.
- We recommend **Comfortis** for dogs with flea allergy or severe infestations and **Revolution or Advantage multi** for cats. Most topical products are equivocal. There are newer oral products for dogs like Trifexis which kills fleas and provides heartworm protection and Nexguard which kills fleas and ticks.

Step 2: Treating the indoor environment

- For minor infestations, and where the pet is not flea-allergic, it may be sufficient simply to administer one of the above monthly flea preventives.
- If environmental flea control is necessary, focus on areas where your pet spends most of its time, as flea eggs will be deposited anywhere a flea-infested pet has access.
- The pet's bedding should be washed weekly along with other material the pet might sleep on such as throw rugs or blankets.
- Daily vacuuming is the most effective way to reduce immature flea populations in the house, removing a large percentage of flea eggs and pre-emerged fleas. Cleaning the carpet before applying insecticides also lifts carpet fibers to allow for maximum penetration of the insecticide. **After vacuuming, it is important to dispose of or freeze the vacuum bag immediately because eggs and larvae will continue to develop inside the bag, resulting in a reservoir of fleas.**
- Insecticides containing synthetic pyrethroids such as permethrin may offer adequate adulticidal activity for several days. One or two applications 7-14 days apart is sufficient if the on-animal recommendations are followed. The combined use of a residual insecticide and an insect growth regulator (methoprene or pyriproxyfen) will produce the best results.

Step 3: Treating the outdoor environment

- Only areas protected from direct sunlight where the soil is moist will provide adequate conditions for flea development. When treating a yard, efforts should be concentrated around bushes, mulch or other moist, shaded areas. Spraying insecticides over the large expanse of a shade-free lawn generally will not be beneficial.
- Synthetic pyrethroids such as cyfluthrin and fenvalerate are available in convenient sprays and usually are effective.

Once a flea problem has started, it may take several months to completely eliminate the fleas from the environment. So be patient, and try to follow as many of these recommendations as possible. The **most vital thing** is to ensure your pets are on one of the flea preventives listed above. This will break the flea lifecycle and prevent them from laying more eggs into the environment to replace the ones you're removing. I also recommend keeping your pets on a monthly preventive after the problem has resolved, as it is a lot easier to prevent a flea problem than it is to treat one.