

Fleas

Fleas are wingless biting insects which are common pests on domestic cats and dogs, as well as other animals.

Fleas from dogs, cats, rats and mice very rarely spread diseases such as plague, typhus and tapeworms to humans. They are however predominantly considered annoying to both people and pets.

Fleas are hatched from eggs which are laid in an animal's fur by an adult flea. The eggs fall from the pet and land on surfaces like bedding, carpeting or the soil in the animal's environment. The eggs hatch into a larva, which then changes into another form called a pupa, and eventually these turn into adults. The time for this process varies depending on a number of factors, and in cool temperatures can take up to a year. Fleas tend to be more common during the warmer seasons.

Only adult fleas bite humans. Flea bites commonly cause skin irritation with itching. Some people and pets suffer from flea bite allergy, with intense itching, hair loss, reddening of the skin and sometimes infection.

Control of spread

- > The best approach to managing fleas is prevention. New safe and effective products for controlling fleas on pets have made this process much easier, and use of insecticidal sprays is now seldom necessary.
- > Contact your veterinarian for advice on selecting the best flea treatment for your pets.
- > If fleas become a problem, treat the pet's environment at the same time as the pet.
- > Frequently vacuum floors, upholstered furniture and areas where pets may sleep indoors.
- > Treat animal bedding by boiling, or use of animal-safe insecticides – use only products that are recommended for use with animals, and consult your veterinarian first if you are in doubt.
- > Animals with fleas should also be treated for tapeworm.
- > Further advice on methods of treatment can be obtained from the environmental health officer at your local council, or a commercial pest control company.