

Fleas



Fleas are wingless biting insects which are common pests found 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.

How fleas are spread

Fleas hatch from eggs laid in an animal's fur by an adult flea. The eggs fall from the pet and land on surfaces like bedding, carpeting or soil in the animal's environment. Eggs hatch into larvae, which next transform into a pupae, and then into adult fleas.

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.

Signs and symptoms

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. Only adult fleas bite humans.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is made by identifying the fleas and/or their eggs.

Treatment

There are a number of simple treatments for flea bites available from a doctor and pharmacist.

Prevention

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 indoor areas where pets may sleep.
- > 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.

For further advice on flea management contact the environmental health officer at your local council, or a commercial pest control company.

You've Got What? Fleas

Communicable Disease Control Branch

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The SA Health Disclaimer for this resource is located at
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/youvegotwhat

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