

Pest Control of Fleas

The most common types of flea are cat fleas and dog fleas, so this section deals with these only. Human fleas are becoming increasingly rare. For more advice on these or other, less common fleas please contact the Pest Control Service.

Where do fleas come from?

Adult fleas live as parasites on warm-blooded mammals. Although there are fleas identified specifically as cat, dog or human fleas, these creatures are by no means found exclusively on these hosts.

Cat fleas cause most infestations, probably because of the large number of domestic pets now kept, and you should pay particular attention to cleaning their bedding. Remember, if your cat has fleas, there could be as many as ten times that number in other parts of the house.

Wall to wall carpeting, bedding and central heating in a home create ideal condition in which flea larvae can develop.

Do fleas do any harm?

In the UK fleas are not often responsible for transmitting disease, however, dog fleas in particular, can transmit the dog tapeworm to humans.

How do I know if I have fleas in my home?

If you keep pets, no matter how careful you are, there is always the possibility that your animal will get fleas. If your pet starts scratching more than usual, or you find bites on your body (a tiny dark red spot, surrounded by a reddened area), which may be extremely itchy, most probably you will have a minor infestation.

How do I get rid of them?

You can treat minor infestations yourself, - suitable insecticides can be obtained from chemists, veterinary surgeries or pet shops, which can be used to treat bedding, carpets, curtains, sofas and chairs. Please follow the instructions given with the product.

Remember, it is not simply a matter of cleaning your pet's bedding thoroughly, although this is another important stage of the process.

You can also buy a flea collar for your pet for use following treatment. A flea collar releases small amounts of insecticide onto the coat of your pet, and, although this will not kill all fleas immediately, it will certainly act as a repellent.

A good vacuuming a week or so after treating soft furnishings will help to remove any remains of the fleas. You should wash and, if possible, tumble dry pet bedding. Remember, for your own safety to follow the manufacturers' instructions on any insecticide packs.

Oxford City Council's Pest Control Service can also treat severe flea infestations in your home. Phone 01865 252888 for details.

Prevention rather than cure

Pest Control of Fleas

As mentioned above, flea collars (and flea powders) for animals will act as a repellent to fleas, but regular washing and cleaning of pet's bedding will help to prevent infestation. Regular vacuuming is another good preventative measure.

Treatment

To treat for fleas we use pyrethrins (low toxicity to mammals) which have a residual effect for about 5-6 months. In general, pyrethrins are "low intensity", relatively safe, and break down quickly (some on contact with sunlight). They can normally be used safely with puppies, kittens and in sensitive conditions. Pyrethrins are from chrysanthemums, and manage to be highly toxic to fleas but not to people or dogs.

What about the bites on my skin?

If you are concerned about the bites, for instance if they become infected, you should contact your G.P. and ask their advice.