



## Cat Fleas

### *Ctenocephalides Felis*

An adult Flea is about 2-4mm long, dark reddish brown, wingless, hard bodied (difficult to crush between the fingers) and is flattened vertically to allow for easy movement between fur, hair or feathers of the host. Fleas are excellent jumpers, jumping up to eight inches.

Each female Flea on the animal lays about twenty eggs per day, which freely fall off the host and into carpets, bedding and soft furniture. The eggs take two to fourteen days to hatch into larvae. The larvae are blind and avoid light; they pass through three larval stages and can take from a week to several months to develop. Their food consists of digested blood from adult flea faeces, dead skin, hair and other organic debris.

The Pupae mature within a silken cocoon woven by the larvae. In about five to fourteen days the adult fleas can emerge. They are often stimulated into doing this by vibration, which could be yourself or your pet walking past.

#### **How do I know if I have Fleas?**

Your pets are usually the first victim of the cat flea and seeing them scratching is a good indication that fleas may be the cause. Treating your animal at this stage can save you a lot of discomfort.

Another indication of having fleas is usually finding their bites mainly around the ankles but also on the arms, stomach and neck. The bites are found in small groups, but this depends on the size of the infestation. Your skin can take several hours to react to a flea bite and the warmth and humidity of the bed causes the bites to itch making many people think that their bed is infested. This is not the case with cat fleas. It is possible to take cat fleas into the bed on you, but the bed would not be an area where they would normally live.

#### **Why have I got Fleas?**

Fleas are a very common pest of the home and are usually brought in by domestic animals. They can also be brought in on you. It has nothing to do with how clean you are; all homes are potential living areas but the flea will need your pet's blood to be able to lay viable eggs.

#### **Can I treat for Fleas myself?**

There are a number of self-treatments on the market from insecticides to Flea Traps. Most of them are effective but there is a bit of preparation work before you spray your house.

First, you will need to treat your animals with an appropriate spray from the vets. Then vacuum the carpets, mats and soft furnishings.

Spray all the soft furnishings with a household flea spray obtained from DIY Stores, Garden Centres or general stores. Use as instructed on the can. Pay more attention to the areas the animals tend to sleep in and wash any animal bedding. Keep your pets away from the areas you are spraying and switch off any fish tank air pumps until the insecticide has had time to settle and dry.

Once you have sprayed the house try not to vacuum it for several days, we recommend about 10 days (vacuuming removes the insecticide).

#### **What can the Council do to help?**

Our Pest Control Team can visit your home and treat the problem. The treatment will cause you a minimum of disturbance and has no odour (unlike aerosol sprays that you buy). You can be in the property during and after the treatment, which usually takes up to 30mins. We recommend that the floor areas are as clear as possible before we treat and that you vacuum beforehand as well. Treatment for fleas is a service that we charge for; there are reductions for people on income related benefits. Contact Animal Control for details on our current charges.