

## Flea Fundamentals



Expert health and behavior advice from the feline care professionals at  
**Paws, Whiskers & Claws**  
**The Feline Hospital**  
www.pawswhiskersandclaws.com

### I have fleas! What should I do?

DO – Treat all pets in the household with a topical flea treatment such as Revolution or Frontline.

DO – Flea comb your pets to remove flea “dirt” as well as live fleas while monitoring progress of treatment.

DO – Vacuum! All carpeted or upholstered areas, furniture, mattresses, cracks and crevices around base boards and cat furniture/scratching posts. Discard your vacuum bag or contents of your vacuum canister immediately outside the home so fleas do not crawl back out.

DO – Laundry! Launder all throw rugs, bath mats, pet bedding and your bedding. Fleas drown in hot, soapy water. Fleas drown in soapy water.

DO – Treat your home. 95% of flea stages are in your environment. Your pets act as a “salt shaker” dispersing eggs everywhere your pet goes in the home. These eggs can survive up to a full year in your carpet, resulting in constant re-infestation if left untreated. You may find a pest control company and choose to treat your home professionally. If you prefer to do it yourself, we offer [Flea Stoppers](#) powder or also check out [Flea Busters](#), both products are safe and effective.

DO – Deworm your cat for tapeworms. Cats groom and ingest fleas, eggs and larvae causing tapeworms in the intestinal tract. Deworming should be given when fleas are discovered and again once fleas have been eliminated.

DO – Be aware that fleas may cause illness in your pet such as infectious anemia, Bartonella (cat scratch disease) or flea allergy dermatitis (FAD).

DO – Make sure that any pet visiting your home, even for a few minutes, has been properly treated for fleas. Many infestations occur after family or friends have visited your home with their unprotected pet.

DO – Treat your car, especially if your pets travel with you.

### I have fleas! What should I *not* do?

DON'T – Treat your pet with grocery store brand topical treatments. These products can be toxic to cats, causing kidney failure, allergic reactions, seizures, coma or even death.

DON'T – Use flea collars, sprays, or flea powders. In addition to not being very effective, these products can be toxic to cats, causing kidney failure, allergic reactions, seizures, coma or even death. The best place for a flea collar is inside your vacuum bag or canister!

DON'T – Use flea shampoos, remember fleas drown in *any* soapy water and the insecticides used in flea shampoos may not be safe for your cat. Additionally, the insecticide is immediately washed off and the now clean cat is re-infested with fleas from the environment.

DON'T – Treat your home with products that may not be safe for you or your pet. Flea “bombs” and most pest control companies are not recommended.

DON'T – Use over the counter deworming medication. In addition to potential safety risks, these products usually are not effective.

DON'T – Assume your cat does not have fleas because you can not see them. Many cats are excellent groomers and often ingest all of the evidence of flea infestation. Weight loss, hair loss, scratching, scabby patches of skin, soft stools, blood in the stool, black comma shaped debris on pet bedding that turns red when moistened are all other indicators of a potential flea problem.

## Flabbergasting Flea Facts!



One female flea can produce 2,000 eggs in it's lifetime – up to 50 per day!



Fleas can reproduce year round, especially in Southern climates.



The adults you see on your pet are only 5% of the problem; 95% of flea infestations are the tiny eggs, larvae and pupae!



Flea infestations can thrive in an area as small as the welcome mat outside your door!



Your pet does not have to go outside to acquire fleas; you can bring them in on your socks and shoes!



Remember flea control products do not create an invisible shield around your pet. Fleas must come into contact with skin or fur to be affected by topical flea treatments. So you may see an occasional flea from time to time.

## Flea-sources

**Revolution® (selamectin)** Revolution is the first-ever FDA-approved, topically applied medication for cats that kills adult fleas (*Ctenocephalides felis*) and prevents flea eggs from hatching, prevents heartworm disease caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*, treats and controls ear mites (*Otodectes cynotis*), treats and controls roundworms (*Toxocara cati*) and hookworms (*Ancylostoma tubaeforme*). Revolution enters the bloodstream through the skin. Concentrations of Revolution in the blood and tissues prevent heartworm disease and prevent and treat roundworm and hookworm infections. Revolution selectively redistributes from the blood to the skin and other tissues, where it provides protection against fleas, flea eggs, and ear mites for one month. It is safe to use on cats that are at least 6 weeks old.

**Frontline® (fipronil)** Frontline is another topically applied medication. One spot-on application kills fleas on cats for 4 weeks. After Frontline has been applied, it spreads to cover the entire body surface, and kills fleas by contact, which means they don't have to bite the animal to die. It is safe to use on cats that are over 8 weeks old.

**Capstar® (nitenpyram)** Capstar is an oral insecticide. It is very fast acting - fleas start to die within 30 minutes of administration, and most are dead within 2-3 hours. Capstar is inexpensive, but unfortunately very short acting. After 24 hours, any fleas arriving on the animal may be unaffected. We use Capstar mainly as an adjunct to topical flea treatments. It is safe to use on cats that are both over 4 weeks old, and more than 2 pounds in weight.

Owner compliance is the best way to eradicate flea infestations. Be diligent with the treatment of all pets in the household, be fastidious about cleanliness and be persistent knowing that there is not a quick fix to a flea infestation. Prevention is the best medicine!