

## Protect Your Cat and Home from Fleas

Every year when flea season begins, the suffering sets in: the itching, the scratching, the biting, the chewing. It's a painful and irritating routine for you and your pet. Flea control should begin as flea prevention, before the flea season starts. Treatment should continue until fall.

If you have a cat that goes outdoors, your cat is going to get fleas, and you will have fleas in your home. Know how to spot and destroy fleas on your pet and in your home.

### 1. Do a Flea Check

Find out if these pests have settled on your cat:

- Watch for any signs of excessive scratching by your cat as well as movement in your cat's fur. If you spot tiny bugs bouncing off your cat's coat, it's time to fight fleas.
- Comb your cat with a fine-toothed metal flea comb from head to tail several times a day to skim off adult fleas and their eggs. This comb-down will ease kitty's itching, and the pampering will make her purr with pleasure.
- If your cat has fleas, dip the comb in a mixture of water and liquid dish detergent to kill the fleas. Do this on the counter in the bathroom to keep any jumping fleas contained.

### 2. Keep Your Feline Flea-Free

Your cat's warm, furry coat and nourishing blood supply are a flea's dream home. Protect kitty with a flea barrier to prevent these tiny pests from freeloading on your cat.

**Warning: Do not use flea collars, topical medications, or any other type of flea products from sources other than a vet. This includes online, pet, and grocery stores.**

Spot-on products are safe, convenient, and effective. Revolution is the most effective flea treatment for cats but should not be used on sick, weak, or underweight cats, or kittens 7 weeks and younger.

Do not buy flea products from any source other than your vet. Ask your vet which is the best product for your cat, where on your cat to put the product, how much of it to use, and how often to use it. All these things depend on the age and condition of the cat.

### 3. Remove Fleas from Your Home

A female flea can lay up to 50 eggs a day! Those smooth eggs can roll right off your cat and onto your carpet. Give them the chance to hatch, and you'll have a full-blown flea infestation on your hands.

Even though it is time-consuming, all soft furnishings should be treated. All nooks and crannies should be included, such as gaps between floorboards and moldings. Treatment of the whole house is essential. Anything that is heavily infested, such as pet bedding, should be treated with a flea control product, laundered in hot water, or thrown out.

**Vacuum every day.** Sprinkle food grade diatomaceous earth or laundry Borax on your carpets, cushioned furniture, and in cracks and crevices in the floor to suck up any eggs before they can hatch into a real-life flea circus. Leave on for one to two hours, then vacuum carpets, cushioned furniture, and cracks and crevices. Throw away the vacuum's bag or wash out its canister to prevent collected immature flea stages from continuing to develop in the house.

**Wash at least once a week.** Strip off any bedding, sofa covers, and other fabrics your pet has touched and throw them straight into the washing machine. Use hot water, so no bugs will survive the wash cycle.

**Treat Stubborn Fleas.** Fleas that stubbornly stick around despite treatment may call for more serious measures.

- Clear the decks. Take all pets and family members out of the house, and then coat carpets and other surfaces with a flea spray. Sprays that work the best contain the ingredient methoprene or pyriproxyfen. If you're worried about chemicals in the house, try a natural citrus spray. Keep pets, kids, and everyone else away until all surfaces have dried.
- Call a flea expert. If fleas decide to take up permanent residence, you might need an exterminator to address the problem.

Even in large numbers, fleas are tiny and pretty easy to kill. After a few weeks of thorough cleaning, they should stop bugging your cat—and you.