



Fleas

What are fleas?

Fleas are the most common skin parasite of the cat. However, fleas will also feed and live on many species such as dogs and rabbits, and will bite humans, causing small areas of irritation.

How do I know if my cat has fleas?

Because fleas are tiny and move so quickly, it is hard to spot them. Often, the only telltale signs are their droppings: red-brown to black comma-shaped specks. To check whether or not these specks are flea dirt, place them onto damp tissue; if they dissolve, turning the paper pink or red, they are. These will be found both on the cat as well as on his bedding.

How can fleas affect my cat?

Many cats are allergic to flea bites and can develop dermatitis (inflamed skin) through excessive grooming. Skin may become raised, thickened and oozing. The cat is very itchy and frequently scratches. Fleas are also a source of tapeworm infestation for cats.

How do I treat my cat for fleas?

All house cats should be treated for fleas. However, no treatment is effective unless the cat's environment is also cleared of both fleas and their eggs. It is essential to wash the cat's bedding, vacuum regularly and treat all areas to which the cat has access with a spray which stops the larvae from developing and kills adult fleas. Flea control products include powders, sprays, mousses, shampoos, spot-on products and flea collars. A flea comb can also be used to remove adult fleas from cats and kittens. Ask your vet for advice.

What about kittens?

Kittens can become anaemic from flea bites. Mothers of nursing kittens should be treated for fleas. Kittens can be treated with a powder (*Head to Tail* veterinary flea powder, Schering-Plough Animal Health) from two weeks, or with spray (*Frontline*, Merial) from two days old.



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