

## What You Should Do When Your Pet Has Fleas

Fleas are some of your dog's most pesky nuisances. It causes them to itch, scratch, and they simply just make your pup miserable. These jumping itty bitty critters can cause a lot of trouble and discomfort for your sweet pet, not to mention they can quickly infest your home as well. These creatures are difficult to get rid of, and long, extreme winters are the only natural way to get rid of these little pests.

Fleas can cause intense skin irritation on your pet, because the insect bites your dog's skin and they then thrive on the blood the bites produce. A flea's life is a relatively quick one (anywhere from a month to a few), yet it has the ability to lay eggs and reproduce rapidly. A flea's life has a total of three stages: 1) egg 2) larvae and 3) pupae. During each of these stages the flea grows, matures, and wreaks havoc on your pup's skin.

So, how can you tell if your pet has fleas? If you see your dog spending more time scratching than usual, sit down with them and carefully look at their coat and move the hair so their skin is visible. If your pet has fleas, you will most likely be able to see a tiny jumping insect that is about the size of gnat, or maybe smaller. If you can't see anything but are still suspicious, have your dog lie down on a white sheet of paper. Then, get a comb and gently go through your pet's coat. If you find tiny little black specks on the white paper, it may be what is commonly called flea dirt. Flea dirt is actually the eliminated feces from a flea (since fleas survive on blood, the feces are basically teeny tiny pellets of dried blood). If, in fact, it is flea dirt, adding a few drops of water should turn the papered area pink.

If your pet has fleas, there are a few actions you can take that will help remedy the infestation, with time. First, begin by giving your dog a bath. Use very warm water (not hot!) and use a flea shampoo. This will help kill the fleas that are on your dog at the time. However, you will need to thoroughly wash your floors and vacuum your carpet, and wash your dog's bedding regularly. The more you can disinfect, the better!

The best defense against fleas is to opt for a flea control/protection medication. Before starting to administer one, be sure to talk to your local veterinarian and they will be able to prescribe something that will work well with your dog and their surroundings. You will need to follow the directions closely, otherwise the medication could be more harmful than helpful.

Fleas are little creatures that are nuisances to our pets. Talk to your vet about how you can safely prevent a flea infestation inside your home or outside. Save your pet the uncomfortable expense, and think ahead about preventing fleas from your home.

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