

Pest Control Advice Fleas

Appearance and Habits

Fleas are carried on mammals and birds. The dog flea and cat flea, which look very alike, are the most widespread and common. Both the males and females bite and suck blood. The bite often leaves an itchy, red spot. They attack dogs and cats but can bite humans, especially if the pets are temporarily away.

The adults are small, wingless insects with hard, dark coloured bodies. They measure between 1 and 4 mm and have long back legs for jumping.

Life Cycle

The female usually lays her eggs, which are pearly white and slightly sticky on the hair, bedding, or clothing of the host (usually a cat or dog), where they will stay for about a week and then drop off. In homes, they develop in crevices in flooring, along skirting boards, under the edges of rugs and between cushions and upholstery.

After 2-3 weeks they grow to 5mm long and spin cocoons for pupation. Fleas formed in cocoons may 'overwinter' at this stage but otherwise emerge by the stimulation of vibration, usually by the host. This is why attacks sometimes take place when the premise has been left empty e.g. when a house is for sale, or the owner returns from holiday. In favourable conditions the life cycle is normally completed in 4 weeks.

Treatment and Control

In most cases infestations can be traced to a cat or dog so control measures for the pet are of prime importance. Advice on treatment for pets should be sought from a vet.

If you have fleas and do not have an animal they may have been carried in from outside on clothing if you have been in contact with animals, or other people may visit you and transport fleas into your home.

Control measures include both thorough cleaning and insecticidal control. Vacuum all rugs, carpets and upholstered furniture. Special attention should be paid to your pets sleeping area. Pet bedding should be thoroughly washed.

For further information contact:

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