

Fleas



Description

- Fleas are blood sucking insects that feed on warm blooded animals.
- They are between 1½ - 5 mm in length (1/16 to 3/16 of an inch) and are oval in shape when looked at from the side.
- Fleas are brown in colour and have powerful legs adapted for jumping.
- Fleas are very thin, this enables them to move easily through the hairs of their host.
- The most common species are the cat flea, dog flea, rabbit flea and the human flea. It is fair to say that practically all cats will pick up fleas at one time or another and it is wise to take precautions against this, such as fitting a cat with a flea collar.



Lifestyle

- All fleas live exclusively as parasites on warm blooded animals and although they have a preferred host, they will also feed on other animals and man. As well as being found on the host, fleas can frequently be found in the host's bedding. Cat fleas are by far the most common, accounting for 75% of all flea infestations. The flea population reaches its peak in September.
- Female fleas lay their eggs on their host or in the animals nest or bedding. The eggs pass through the normal insect stages of egg, larva, and pupa. The adult flea does not emerge immediately and will only do so when stimulated by vibration, such as an animal or human walking by.
- Adults can stay in their pupal stage for long periods before emerging and both the pupae and the adults can survive long periods (8 to 12 months) without a host to feed on. This explains why houses that have been empty for long periods can harbor active fleas long after the host, such as a domestic cat, has left.

Significance

Fleas are known carriers of disease and can also be responsible for the transmission of parasitic worms. In the United Kingdom, however, fleas are not generally responsible for the spread of infection but do inflict on their host unpleasant bites.

Flea bites will be seen as a tiny red spot surrounded by a reddened area. The bite will remain irritating for one to two days and, in some cases, may lead to hypersensitivity. The irritation can be reduced by using ointments available from your local chemist.

Control

- It is important to regularly check pets for any sign of fleas. This can be done by grooming the pet with a flea comb.
- If a flea is found it can be disposed of by placing it under water in a small bowl.
- Flea collars can be fitted to cats and dogs and are effective for several months.
- More advice on such preventive measures can be obtained from your veterinary surgeon.
- Pets which have fleas should only be treated with proprietary flea treatments, available from chemist shops or veterinary surgeons and the manufacturers instructions on the label should be strictly adhered to.

- Care is required when dealing with cats and puppies, since they may be sensitive to some insecticides. In case of doubt the advice of a veterinary surgeon should be obtained.
- Wherever a flea problem is detected and the animal has been treated, it is essential that the premises is treated as well.
- The animal's bedding and areas where it spends a lot of time should be cleaned, preferably using a vacuum cleaner. A teaspoon full of insecticide powder may be placed in the cleaner bag prior to use or deliberately sucked into the cleaner following cleaning of the bedding etc. in order to kill any insects collected in the cleaner.
- The animal's bedding should be laundered wherever possible or else sprayed with an insecticide designed for the purpose.
- Care should be exercised if insecticides are to be used in kitchens or food areas. This is because of the risk of contaminating food. The manufacturers instructions on the insecticide label should be followed.

Please be aware that there is very little point in treating the premises unless the animal is disinfested at the same time, and if you make an appointment for the Pest Control Officer to call you should ensure that the animal concerned can be de-fleaed at the same time. The Pest Control Officer cannot carry out treatments to animals.

Spelthorne Borough Council does provide a service for the treatment of domestic premises infested with fleas, although a charge of £44.00 is made for this service. Should you require a treatment, please contact Spelthorne's Customer Services on 01784 451499 to make a booking or alternatively e-mail customer.services@spelthorne.gov.uk

Advice Prior to Treatment

- Vacuum throughout the premises, including cracks and crevices, and dispose of the dust-bag immediately after vacuuming.
- Once the treatment has been completed do not vacuum or clean the treated surfaces for **14 days** to allow the treatment to be effective.
- With flea infestations any **pets must be treated at the same time** either by yourself or a vet.
Spelthorne Borough Council do not treat pets.
- Clear the floor area as much as possible (toys, boxes, magazines, under beds and furniture etc.) to allow the Pest Control Officer to spray the floors.
- With fleas, beds need to be treated. Strip the beds and wash bedding in the hottest temperature the fabric will allow (check manufacturers guidelines). The Pest Control Officer will also spray the mattress but beds may be slept in that night providing they are dry.
- Remove all persons and animals from the area being treated both during, and after the treatment for a minimum of two hours (or until the treated area is dry).
- Cover all fish tanks until the treatment has been completed.
- The treatment may smell slightly but this will disappear after a short while.

TO ENSURE THE BEST RESULTS FORM THE TREATMENT AND TO DISCOURAGE RE-INFESTATION WE STRONGLY ADVISE YOU TO FOLLOW THIS ADVICE