



Fleas

We live in a densely populated flea region. Flea infestations are common in dogs who are not on a regular flea preventative. In cats, flea infestations are also common in those not on a preventative who go outdoors and/or live in households with dogs. Flea infestations in cats are also under-recognized due to their fastidious grooming habits.

Fleas are tough, hardy parasites. They can deposit eggs in blankets, carpets, and bedding that are capable of lasting several months and hatching later.

Diseases caused by fleas

Fleas carry infectious diseases, cause discomfort, skin inflammation and skin infections, and are a major allergy source. Fleas feed on blood and also carry infectious bacteria that can infect the bloodstream of dogs and cats that can lead to serious anemia. Auto-immune diseases can also be triggered by flea-borne infections and can be life-threatening. Tapeworms are an intestinal parasite also transmitted through fleas.

Flea allergies are common and can cause a syndrome called Flea Allergic Dermatitis (FAD), which is characterized by intense itchiness and skin infections. It can take just one flea bite to incite an allergic inflammatory response.

Treatment

Treatment of flea infestations is multi-pronged and involves providing immediate itch relief, clearing of fleas from the patient, clearing of fleas from the home environment, and initiation of a flea preventative product to cover the life-cycle of the flea. This usually means administration of a fast-acting medication to eliminate adult fleas from the patient to provide immediate itch relief. Simultaneously, starting a flea preventative product to further disrupt the flea life cycle and prevent fleas from reproducing is indicated. Cleaning the environment at home through thorough vacuuming and laundering of bedding, etc. to remove both adults and flea eggs is essential. It takes 3 months to resolve a flea infestation.

Addressing flea allergy dermatitis may involve allergy medication and antibiotics as well.

Deworming for possible tapeworm infection is warranted.

All animals in the household should be treated and dewormed.