



The Life of a Flea:

- I. **Eggs** – A female flea feeds on a host (a blood meal is necessary for reproduction); and then lays on average, 40 eggs a day, on the hosts body. These eggs will fall off of the pet and distribute throughout the environment. It takes anywhere from 2 days to 2 weeks for these eggs to hatch, depending on the environment.
- II. **Larvae** – Once hatched, the larvae emerge blind and will avoid direct light. They are white in color and feed on the “flea dirt” of the adult fleas in the environment. The larvae will spin cocoons in about 5-10 (up to 20 days), if conditions are preferable.
- III. **Pupae** – Last developmental stage before the adult flea. The cocoon protects the pupae for several days to weeks, to months in some cases if conditions are not right. Cocoons have a sticky outer coating that make them difficult to vacuum/sweep away, and it also protects the pupae from chemicals. The adult flea will not emerge until there is an obvious presence of a potential host.
- IV. **Adult Fleas** – Once they emerge, fleas need to feed on a host within a few hours. After the first meal, females will begin laying eggs, and the cycle begins again. Adult fleas can live on a host for up to 2 months.

Common Myths:

- i. *“My pet can’t have fleas, they do not go outside.”*
 - Fleas can enter the home on our shoes, or through doorways/windows.
 - Fleas thrive in temperature-regulated areas, such as our homes.
- ii. *“If my pet had fleas, they would be biting me/my family.”*
 - Fleas prefer an animal host because they are much easier to breed on than humans.
 - Humans are usually only bitten when the flea population is out of control in an area.

iii. *“My pet does not have fleas; I would have seen them.”*

- If a pet has only a couple-few fleas, you may not notice; when pets are irritated and bite/lick their skin, the fleas either jump off the pet, or are swallowed – leaving no evidence.
- Fleas are usually seen in cases where there is a high flea-load on the pet.

Eliminating the Enemy:

- All pets in the house must be treated for at least 3 months to ensure all live fleas in the environment are killed.
- Vacuum all carpets and area rugs daily for several weeks.
- Wash all bedding daily (pet and human) that your pet normally lays on for several weeks
- Treat “non-washable” areas of the house with pet-safe flea spray
 - An exterminator may be needed in worst-case scenarios.

Tapeworms?

- Often times pets will develop tapeworms after having a flea infestation.
- When a pet ingests a flea infected with tapeworm larvae, the body of the flea is digested, and the tapeworm now attaches to the intestines and starts to grow.
- Tapeworm infections are usually found when owners notice “grains of rice” around the rectum of the pet, or in the pet’s bedding. Sometimes worms/segments are also seen in the stool.
- Tapeworms usually cause little harm and are easily treated with a dewormer, provided by your veterinarian.

Prevention is Key!

- It is much easier to prevent a flea infestation, rather than eliminating one!
- East Oak Animal Hospital offers a wide variety of flea preventatives for both dogs and cats.
- We recommend flea prevention year-round, due to the warmer winter weather – the fleas are not being killed in the environment and continue to infect pets.