

## Natural Flea Control

During the warm summer months, adult female fleas lay 35-50 eggs a day, laying up to 2,000 eggs in their 12 to 20 month lifetime. After an incubation period of 2-12 days, eggs hatch into small, transparent worm-like larvae. These feed upon organic material such as flea fecal matter and dried skin. They are relatively mobile, crawling into warm, moist, dark areas like cracks and crevices, litter boxes, rugs, soil, etc. After 1-2 weeks, the larvae spin cocoons, transforming themselves into pupae. Adult fleas emerge days to months later, depending on environmental conditions, and so the cycle begins again. So... cleaning the environment becomes as important, or more important, than killing the live fleas on your pet.

Steam clean carpets at the onset of flea season - the process kills flea eggs and larvae.

Thoroughly clean and vacuum floors and carpets - if done weekly, most eggs, larvae and pupae will be removed from your house. Make sure to dispose of the vacuum bag, or vacuum up some flea powder, to prevent the larvae from creeping out of the bag.

Apply mineral salts on your carpets - Boric acid derivatives, like the Fleabusters powder, have very low toxicity and can be effective for a whole year, killing fleas and their developing forms by dehydration. Easy to apply, the powder is brushed into and under bedding, furniture and carpets, and into cracks and crevices of linoleum and hardwood floors. Brush or sweep into infested areas and leave for 3-4 days; then vacuum. Dehydration is not a 'quick kill' method; maximum results are usually achieved within 3-4 weeks.

Sprinkle natural, unrefined diatomaceous earth along walls, on crevices, under built-in furniture; the product resembles chalky rock, and attacks the external coating of insects, causing dehydration. Wear a dust mask when applying to prevent inhalation (it can irritate nasal passages so keep your pet's nasal passages in mind as well); apply only once or twice yearly. (Do not use the diatomaceous earth sold for swimming pool filters since it is finely ground and can be more easily inhaled.)

Wash your pet's bedding weekly - use hot, soapy water, and dry on high heat.

Mow and water your lawn regularly - watering drowns fleas; sunlight kills larvae.

'Sterilize' bare earth sleeping spots - after raking up leaves and debris, cover the area with a black plastic bag on a sunny day: the heat created kills fleas and larvae.

Apply agricultural lime on grass and moist areas - it dehydrates fleas.

Apply powdered nematodes to grass and soil - these microscopic organisms (and ants, as well) feed on eggs and larvae, and also control grubs. They are usually applied every 6 weeks and are an efficient flea control method for out-of-doors.

Bathe your pet with a natural flea control shampoo - begin by creating a 'shampoo collar' around the neck, and lather towards the tail. Leave lather on for 7-10 minutes and rinse thoroughly. (A more

prolonged bath will wash off eggs and drown the adult fleas.) Make sure to comb head and neck as the fleas try to reach dry ground.

Flea comb your pet as often as possible - the fine-toothed combs will trap fleas, and you can dip the comb in hot water as you pull them out. Be thorough especially around the head, neck, back and tail areas.

Use an herbal flea powder - a mixture of any of these powdered herbs will work: eucalyptus, rosemary, fennel, yellow dock, wormwood, rue. Store in a shaker-top jar and apply to the hair base as you brush backwards with your hand. The fleas will try to jump off, so this is better done outside. Can be done many times a week.

Use a lemon skin tonic - lemon is an effective skin toner and a parasite repellent because it contains d-limonene, among other substances. Thinly slice a whole lemon, including the peel. Add to a pint of near-boiling water and steep overnight. Sponge onto your pet's skin and coat and let air dry. Can be used daily.

Erigeron spray, Neem spray, Flea Be Gone ([www.ElizabethEssentials.com](http://www.ElizabethEssentials.com)), Green Hope Essences ([www.greenhopeessences.com](http://www.greenhopeessences.com)), Sentry Natural Defense ([www.sentrynatural.com](http://www.sentrynatural.com)), Natural Flea Repellent – Evolv ([www.wondercide.com](http://www.wondercide.com)), Buckle Flea and Tick Holistic Pet Collar ([www.holisticfamilyandpets.com](http://www.holisticfamilyandpets.com)), Flea Free ([www.fleafreefamily.com](http://www.fleafreefamily.com)) - these are herbal products that help repel fleas.

Keep your pet healthy! Healthier animals seem to attract the least fleas. You may want to add nutritional (brewer's) yeast and garlic to your pet's diet.