

FLEA INFESTATION AND FLEA ALLERGY

THE FLEA CYCLE

Adult fleas live on pets and feed by sucking their blood.

The eggs are deposited on the animal's body, and fall into the animal's environment. After the hatching of the eggs, the flea larvae feed on the blood-rich feces of the parents or any other organic material available in the environment.

The larvae represent the most vulnerable life form and therefore tend to hide from light and environmental insults by nesting in cracks in floors, between carpet fibers, and in kennels. At the end of its development, the larva weaves a cocoon and forms a pupa.

In the cocoon, the larva undergoes a metamorphosis and becomes an adult flea.

Adult fleas remain in the cocoon until there are favorable conditions outside such as the presence of a host on which to feed and an optimal climate. Adult fleas still in the cocoon can endure in the hostile environment for up to a year without dying.

FLEA TREATMENT AND CONTROL

In the event of an infestation, it is important to treat all household pets and the environment.

There are in market numerous effective pesticide products for insecticidal treatment. It is recommended to follow your veterinarian's advice regarding the choice of products and frequency of application, as there is great variability and specificity of action among the various products available. The most common formulations are sprays or spot on (drops to be applied locally to the skin between the shoulder) once every 3-4 weeks. Collars, shampoos powders pesticides have limited efficacy and are therefore less advisable for the systematic flea control.

ALLERGIC FLEA BITE DERMATITIS

WHAT IS ALLERGIC FLEA BITE DERMATITIS (DAP)

DAP is a common cause of itching and skin problems in both dogs and cats. Typically, the problem occurs in the summer, however, if the animal lives in an infested home environment, it can occur year-round.

THE CAUSES

Allergy is triggered against an antigen present in flea saliva. The DAP, like many allergies, can develop at any age, and signs can appear suddenly, even in animals in which fleas are not frequently seen.

Curiously, animals more accustomed to living with fleas rarely manifest the allergy, probably because they have developed tolerance.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Dogs with DAP suffer from intense itching; even the presence of a few fleas on these dogs can cause severe discomfort. AD most commonly affects areas of skin in the lumbar region, at the base of the tail, on the inner face of the thighs, and on the abdomen. The skin in these areas can become warm, reddened and swollen, and, because these areas are itchy, dogs will scratch and lick themselves intensely causing self trauma. Secondary bacterial infections can develop on these lesions with pustules, crusts and alopecia.

If the problem goes unchecked, the skin goes through a series of chronic changes such as lichenification (skin thickening), hyperpigmentation (darker skin), and seborrhea (skin with flaky greasy and smelly)