

## Fleas

Fleas are ectoparasites and females require a blood meal to produce eggs. After feeding on a host, females can produce about 30-50 eggs per day that fall off the host animal and into carpeting or other areas of the home or outside in areas where the animal frequents. Larvae feed on organic matter as well as partially digested blood excreted by the adult fleas. After fleas pupate, they hatch out of the cocoon in about 2 weeks, but pupae can remain dormant for up to 5 months waiting for a host.



Photo by Roger Meola.

A proper flea management program has multiple parts. Fleas should be managed on the pets as well as in the environment. Grooming the animal with a flea comb and/ or regular bathing can help reduce flea numbers. A veterinarian should be consulted about flea control products for pets; there are numerous products on the market that work well when used according to label instructions. When you find fleas on a pet, you need to treat the pet and any areas where the pets frequent, inside and outside the home. Treatment should be targeted to areas where the pet likes to hang out.

Fleas found around or in homes that do not have pets may be coming from wildlife. Attic and crawl spaces should be inspected for wildlife activity. Wildlife should be removed with traps and after removal, the area treated with an insecticide labeled for fleas and sealed so that wildlife cannot move in again.



Flea debris- hair and fecal material.

New homeowners may also have problems with fleas shortly after moving in if the previous owners had pets with fleas. Fleas can remain dormant for several months and become active again when they sense vibrations from hosts.

Inside, vacuum thoroughly and regularly, getting under furniture and along baseboards to reduce flea eggs, larvae and pupae. Place the used vacuum bag in a sealed plastic bag and throw away in an outdoor garbage can at least once a week so fleas do not hatch out and re-infest the home. Target pesticides to areas where the pets frequent.

Wash pet bedding in hot water. Bathe pets regularly and use a flea comb to remove fleas. Avoid walking pets in known flea infested areas.

Outside, pesticide treatments should target areas where pets frequent. Full sun areas do not need to be treated as fleas will not remain in these areas.

When treating for fleas, you need to treat at least two times. The second treatment should occur 10-14 days after the initial treatment.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at [www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com](http://www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com)

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