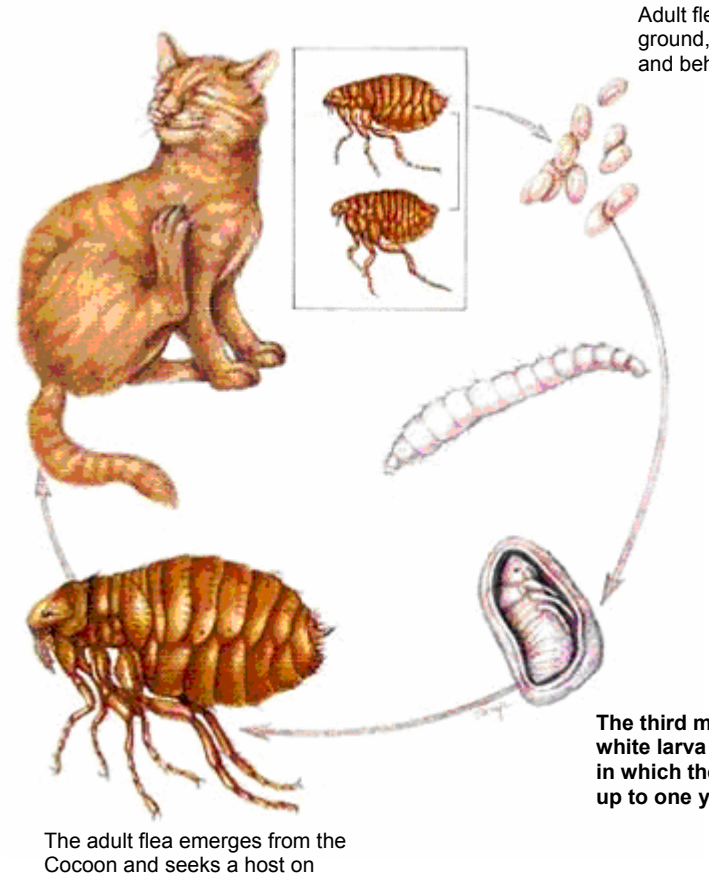
Client Information Series

Fleas



Fleas

Diagnostic Plan
History
Physical examination
Stool inspection for tapeworm segments

Therapeutic Plan
Dewormers
Flea control

Nutritional Plan
Nutrition based on individual patient evaluation including body condition and other organ system involvement or disease

Fleas

Your pet has fleas. Fleas are blood-sucking parasites that live on the skin's surface. Fleas can be controlled with insecticides. But control must include treating fleas on the animal, in the house, and in the pet's outdoor environment. This client education sheet will help you learn more fleas condition and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

What You Should Know About Fleas

Generally, only adult fleas are found on pets. After ingesting blood from an animal, female fleas lay eggs on the pet, inside the house in cracks and crevices, or outside on damp ground. Over her life span, a female flea may lay several hundred eggs. Immature fleas called larvae hatch within two weeks. Larvae live in cracks and crevices and feed on organic material, including tapeworm eggs. Under warm, moist conditions, the entire life cycle may occur in as little as 16 days, or it may take as long as a year under unfavorable conditions. This aspect of the life cycle explains how fleas survive from year to year in harsh climates.

Diagnosis

Finding fleas, flea eggs, or flea debris (flea feces, which when dry look like black pepper) on an animal is proof of flea infestation. Other signs of flea infestation include tapeworm infection (white segments shaped like cucumber seeds found crawling on the ground or on the hair near a pet's anus).

Treatment and Home Care

Flea infestations are best controlled by simultaneously treating fleas on the animal, in the house, and in the pet's outdoor environment on a regular basis.

Fleas on the animal can be treated with spot-on products, insecticidal dips, shampoos, sprays, and powders. There are also oral and injectable products that arrest the flea life cycle. The flea products available from your veterinarian kill fleas rapidly and provide long-lasting action. These products are also safe.

Frequent vacuuming can help remove flea eggs and larvae from carpets and furniture. Vacuum bags should be disposed of immediately. Steam cleaning carpets is very effective, too. The pet's bedding should be washed and thoroughly dried. Insecticides can then be used to complete the in-home clean-up. Insecticides selected for use in the home should combine instant and residual flea-killing power. Foggers are popular and effective; however, their mist does not penetrate underneath furniture, behind baseboards, and in closets. These areas must be sprayed. Instead of being treated with a fogger, the entire house may be sprayed with appropriate insecticides.

Flea control outside the home should be aimed at areas where the pet spends most of its time. Grass and weeds should be mowed and the clippings removed. Within reason, areas where the pet spends its time (under porches, in its dog house, in the yard near the home, etc.) should be sprayed or dusted with insecticides designed to kill fleas. Hand-held sprayers, garden hose attachments, and fertilizer spreaders are appropriate for insecticide application.

Because of the flea's life cycle, insecticides used on the pet and on the premises will need to be applied more than once, according to your veterinarian's recommendation. One-time application is rarely effective in breaking the flea's life cycle.

Nutrition Plan

If your pet has fleas, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition, the degree of flea infestation and severity of the complications, and the presence or absence of disease in other organs or body systems. If your pet has a complication of flea infestation such as anemia or skin allergies, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions.

Optimal nutrition should provide for a pet's needs during each stage of its life. Optimal nutrition should also reduce the health risks associated with feeding excess sodium, calcium, phosphorus, protein, and fat. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition for each stage of a pet's life include the Hill's® Science Diet® foods for dogs and cats. Hill's Science Diet® Sensitive Skin products provide a superior antioxidant bundle with high levels of omega fatty acids to restore skin health and relieve itchiness.

Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). However, do not add water to your cat's food. Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet.

Presented as an educational service by

Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: _____

Patient's Name: _____

Medication(s): _____

Nutritional Recommendation: _____

Follow-Up Appointment: _____ (Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.