



Turramurra Veterinary Hospital

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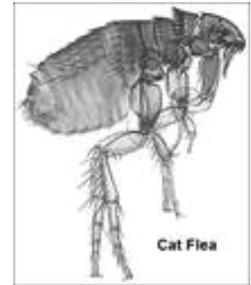
## INTEGRATED FLEA CONTROL

Fleas cause distress to pets and their owners, and are usually more prevalent in summer months.

There are 3 main forms of control – killing adult fleas, preventing reproduction of fleas, and killing eggs and larvae.

### **a) Killing fleas:**

Products include Frontline spray or spot on applied monthly (this also helps with tick control when applied every 2 weeks), Advantix spot on (never on cats), Advantage spot on, Revolution spot on, Comfortis chews. Flea collars, powders or washes are generally poor at flea control.



### **b) Preventing reproduction of fleas:**

Products include Sentinel monthly chews, Program injection, Program monthly tablets or Comfortis monthly tablets. These sterilise adult fleas by preventing formation of chitin, which is needed for flea eggs to hatch. (Chitin is found only in the body of insects not mammals). Frontline spot on contains an insect growth regulator that also prevents flea eggs hatching. Flea bombs prevent flea eggs hatching – but most eggs will be in dark areas, such as under chairs and sofas, so these should be moved before flea bombing.

### **c) Killing eggs and larvae: Environmental control**

Environmental control is the critical step. Flea eggs will concentrate in areas that pets spend the most time, including on your own bed! Vacuum and steam clean carpets. Wash all bedding in hot water (in excess of 60 degrees), dispose of old bedding, vacuum everywhere daily including moving furniture and vacuum areas underneath furniture. Clean the inside of the car thoroughly. Objects that cannot be washed can be placed outside in direct sunlight. Flea bomb affected areas after vacuuming. Environmental sprays such as Indorex can be used to access tricky spots underneath furniture.

### **Treat ALL in-contact pets**

ALL pets in the household must be treated, even if adult fleas are not seen on them. The affected pet may be allergic to fleas and the “unaffected” pet not, but still carry fleas that remain a source of infestation.

## FLEA CONTROL “BREAKDOWN”

It can be a great source of frustration to veterinarians and pet owners when flea control “break down” occurs and fleas remain in spite of treatment with preventatives.

### **The flea population**

The difficulty of flea control is that adult fleas are only “the tip of the iceberg.” Each adult flea can lay thousands of eggs and the majority of the flea population (95%) is eggs and larvae, in carpets or the environment, not the adult fleas. Therefore, environmental control is the critical step. Controlling adult fleas may still leave large numbers of viable eggs and larvae untouched. These hatch and develop into adults, causing re-infestation. Eggs may take up to 3 or 6 months to hatch – so control of adults may be needed for 3 months or more until the flea population declines.

### **Seasonality**

Animal movement, warm weather and humidity promote egg hatching, meaning that generally the flea population peaks in summer – although indoor pets in houses with central heating may experience year round flea problems. If flea control is ceased over winter, just a few live adult fleas can lay thousands of



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eggs, which will hatch over summer.

### **Flea plagues**

These may occur after moving into a new house or returning from holidays. Where there is an existing infestation of flea eggs, the sudden increase in movement of animals and people may trigger mass hatching of eggs, leading to a “flea plague”.

### **Use products according to directions**

Products must be used according to directions at least monthly for 3 months or more – every 6 or 8 weeks will not work. If a flea killing product is chosen, existing flea eggs in the environment will still hatch out. Good control may take a few months.

Use this check list to see if there are any flaws in your flea control regime.

- Treat ALL in-contact pets
- Store flea control products according to directions at less than 30 degrees
- Use flea control at least once monthly on all cats and dogs in the house on the same date
- Use the correct dose for each pet – don't divide pipettes
- Remove collar prior to application, apply to dry skin between shoulder blades
- If using Frontline, do not bath or shampoo pet 48 hours before or until 48 hours after treatment
- Unless prescribed do not use medicated shampoo, detergent, cleaning agents, soap or human shampoo to wash your pet.
- Avoid letting pets swim daily
- If using Sentinel give tablet at meal time, not on an empty stomach (to allow correct absorption)
- Discard all flea infested items where practical, eg bedding and blankets.
- Wash any non-disposable bedding in water above 60 degrees C
- If pets have access to house, vacuum carpets regularly, steam cleaning if possible to remove flea eggs and immature stages of fleas. Clean between tile cracks, floorboards and paving.
- Clean pets' favoured resting areas regularly, eg under patio, veranda, kennel, your bedroom.
- Clean the inside of the car and any travel crates.
- Stop untreated animals coming into environment.
- Block off access to certain areas, eg under the house.
- Continue flea control over winter.