



New Hope Veterinary Clinic



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FLEAS!



- Where do fleas come from?

Cats and dogs share the same flea species. Fleas typically are spread directly from animal to animal. They can also be picked up from a contaminated environment, more often an inside environment, less commonly outside. The number of fleas in grass/yards is relatively low because flea eggs are very sensitive to conditions of too much sunlight, heat, moisture, etc. Immature stages of fleas like stable, indoor environments much better. They do not like the low humidity found in households during winter as the furnace drying the air will kill many immature fleas.

- What do fleas look like?

Fleas on your pet are small, about the size of a pinhead, and very fast, jumping from place to place very quickly. Often time they are seen on the back of an animal towards the tail, but can be anywhere on a pet. More often it is easier to see “flea dirt”, the digested blood that fleas leave behind. It appears like pepper in the hair of an animal. This material, put on a white surface and moistened will turn red in color.

- Where are fleas found?

The adult flea is the only stage of the life cycle that can be seen easily. Unfortunately, the other stages are numerous and present anywhere your pets walk, sleep, and play. Adult fleas lay eggs which hatch after several weeks (or longer) into larvae (like the caterpillar stage), which then turn into pupae (like the cocoon stage), which then emerge as adult fleas.

- How can flea infestation be prevented?

The best way is to avoid animals or places that may harbor fleas (parks, boarding facilities, anywhere outside!). Realizing this is not feasible for most pets, applying a preventative such as Frontline Plus every month for cats and every two months for dogs should avoid flea infestation.

- How can a flea infestation be treated?

First, treat the animals. Apply Frontline Plus at monthly intervals. Capstar is an oral tablet that can be given at the first sign of fleas to kill any adult fleas on the pet for 24 hours. Flea baths will also kill adult fleas currently on a pet, but has no residual activity so new fleas can jump on immediately.

Treating the environment may be necessary in some situations, such as when a house becomes overrun. In such cases, frequently people in the household may get fleabites (don't worry, fleas won't stay on people. They eat and run). Treatment of a household involves two steps:

1. Clean, clean, and clean. Wash and dry (very hot!) all bedding that the pets sleep on. Vacuum all surfaces and dispose of the vacuum cleaner bag (seal it so the little pupae don't all emerge as adults and jump back out!)
2. After doing step one, fogging the household will help get rid of the immature stages. Read directions on the can of fogger and follow all safety precautions. Close the house and turn off the air conditioner or furnace so the “fog” stays within the house and rooms. Set off foggers and return after several hours. Spray any areas that the “fog” may not get (under beds, tables, etc). Do not vacuum for at least a week to allow time for the product to work into the carpeting. Don't forget areas such as mudrooms, entry areas, where the pets spend time jumping up and down, and scattering flea eggs.

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