

It's a Flea's Life



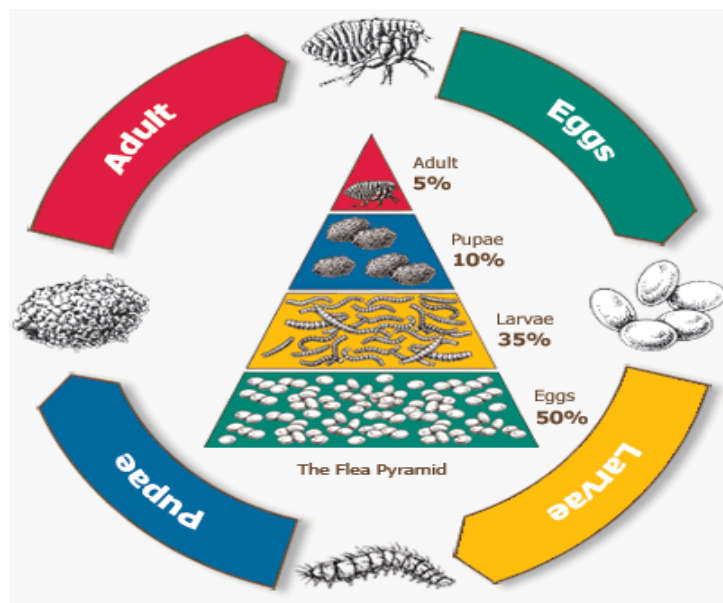
By: Laura Monchak

Are you enjoying the warm weather out? Unfortunately, you aren't the only one! Flea season has arrived early and in full force this year and the fleas are enjoying this beautiful, early spring as much as you are. This means starting on flea prevention early and avoiding outbreaks before they occur.

There are now many convenient options available- from monthly topicals applied to the back of the neck to monthly oral pills and even injectables for cats that last a full 6 months. Each option works a little differently and this will help you decide, along with your veterinarian, what option is best for your pet.

The flea life cycle begins when an adult flea lays up to 20 eggs in her environment which can be your pet, furniture, carpet, or any other area in your home or outdoors. The flea eggs hatch into larva in 2-24 days time and remain at this stage for up to 6 months. They then cocoon anywhere from a week to a year before emerging as an adult flea. The egg, larval, and adult phases are when the flea is vulnerable to treatment. The length of time the whole maturation process takes relies greatly on the temperature and humidity of the environment. The hotter and more humid it is the faster the cycle occurs. After the adult flea emerges from the cocoon it searches for a blood meal and becomes a nuisance and an irritant to your pet. After the blood feast the adult flea lays more eggs and the life cycle begins all over again. The adult fleas live mostly in the environment and are

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only on your pet to get a blood meal, so knowing how the cycle works gives us the ability to both treat it when it occurs and prevent the cycle before it even begins. If the adults are killed there will be no more eggs laid and if the eggs are destroyed then the number of fleas will decline. The life cycle, however, can take months and therefore it is important to continue treating for more than a month to effectively stop the cycle.

Advantage is a once a month, over the counter flea treatment that is applied to the skin on the back of your pet's neck. It comes in different coloured vials depending on the weight of the pet so it is important to have an accurate weight. It can be sold in a 4 or 6 pack or singly applied at your veterinary clinic. Advantage contains the active ingredient imidaclopride which is effective at killing the adult phase of the flea life cycle. The fleas are killed when they make

contact with the pet's skin and do not need to bite for it to work. Advantage is effective at controlling fleas on your pet within one day of applying it and lasts 3-4 weeks on most pets. There is also the option of using Advantage Multi which is regular Advantage with an added monthly dewormer. It is applied and works exactly the same way. Since this product is also a dewormer it requires a prescription from your vet to purchase. It can be sold in a 6 pack or individual doses to take home.

Revolution is very similar to Advantage Multi. It is a monthly flea treatment and a dewormer that is applied to the back of your pet's neck. It also comes in different coloured vials depending on your pet's weight. It contains the active ingredient selamectin and works to break the life cycle by killing the adult fleas. The fleas do however have to bite the dog to be killed. Revolution is a prescription medicine and therefore must be prescribed by your veterinarian. It comes in packages or can be sold individually by your veterinarian.



Program is another other option for pet owners and it is quite different then Advantage or Revolution. Program's active ingredient is lufenuron and it works to break the flea life cycle by killing the eggs and larval stage before they even hatch or cocoon to become adults, and therefore effectively works as a flea birth control. Since it does not contain dewormer you can buy it without a prescription from your vet. Program is used only for prevention of flea infestations before they occur or once they are resolved as it does not affect the adult biting fleas that are already present. It comes in various forms depending on the pet species. For dogs it comes in a once a month oral pill and for cats it comes in a once a month oral liquid or a 6 month SQ injection much like a vaccine.



Comfortis is the newest flea control option available to pet owners. It is a once a month beef flavoured oral tablet for both dogs and cats that is dosed by the pet's weight. It is recommended to be given with a meal. The active ingredient in Comfortis is spinosad and it works by quickly killing the adult fleas after they bite, and before they have time to lay eggs. It is therefore effective as regular flea prevention and for treating flea infestations. As Comfortis is a new product it does require a prescription from your veterinarian and can be sold individually or in packs of 6 tablets.



There are many convenient options available to you as a pet owner to keep your pet flea free during the warm spring and summer months. Starting on flea prevention early ,before an outbreak occurs, is the best way to keep you and your furry friend from spending less time itching and more time enjoying the beautiful weather.

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