

A.R.T. News

FLEAS

Adult fleas are not only a nuisance to humans and their pets, but can cause medical problems including allergy dermatitis, secondary skin irritations and in extreme cases, anemia. Although bites are rarely felt it is the resulting irritation caused by the flea salivary secretions that varies among individuals. Adult fleas are about 1/16 to 1/8-inch long dark reddish-brown, wingless, hard bodied, have three pairs of legs and are flattened vertically or side to side allowing easy movement between the hair, fur or feather of the host.

A typical flea population consists of 50% eggs, 35% larvae, 10% pupae and 5% adults. Completion of the life cycle from egg to adult varies from two weeks to eight months depending on the temperature, humidity, food and species. Normally after a blood meal, the female flea lays about 15 to 20 eggs per day up to 600 in a lifetime usually on the host. Eggs hatch in two days to two weeks into larvae found indoors in floor cracks and crevices, baseboards, under rug edges and in furniture or beds. Outdoor development occurs in sandy soils where the pest may rest or sleep.

Larvae is blind, avoids light, passes through three larval stages and takes a week to several months to develop. In about five to fourteen days, adult fleas emerge or may remain resting in the cocoon until the detection of vibration (people or pet movement), pressure (host animal laying on them) heat, noise, carbon dioxide (meaning potential blood source is near). Adult fleas cannot survive or lay eggs without a blood meal, but may live from two months to one year without feeding.

Flea control is best achieved with a simultaneous coordinated effort involving strict sanitation, pet treatment and premise treatment. There are literally hundreds of products on the market for flea control on pets and the premises. For successful flea control infected pets and the premises need to be treated at the same time.

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