

Pest Control Information - Fleas

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Summary

To guard against flea infestations pets should be regularly checked for fleas and treated if necessary with a flea spray or collar. Regular use of a flea comb is also very effective. If a minor flea infestation is suspected all clothing and bedding should be thoroughly cleaned and carpet edges and soft furnishings should be vacuumed and the bag needs to be thrown away after use. Forest of Dean District Council does offer a disinfestation service where a trained operative is sent in to spray the house in question with insecticide.

The Life Cycle of the Flea

The adult flea is about 2mm long and brownish in colour. The three main common species are the cat flea, the dog flea and the human flea.

Flea eggs are small, oval shaped and pearl white in colour and are laid indiscriminately in the fur of the host or in its bedding or resting material. The eggs hatch in about one week into white threadlike larvae. The larvae thrive in dark, humid places such as carpets and animal bedding. After two to three weeks when they are fully-grown the larvae spin a cocoon and pupate. The adult usually emerges within seven weeks but can remain as a pupa throughout the winter, only emerging when triggered by the movement of a suitable host. The complete life cycle will normally last four weeks but may take longer at low temperatures.

All fleas live as parasites on warm-blooded animals and although they have a preferred host, both the cat and dog flea can also be found on and feed from other animals and man. Fleas can also be found in the host's bedding. The flea population reaches its peak in September and is a particular problem in areas of high population density.

Fleas can be responsible for the transmission of parasitic worms such as the dog tapeworm so it is advisable to regularly worm your dog or cat.

Flea bites will be seen as tiny dark red spots surrounded by a reddened area. The bite will remain irritating for one to two days and in some cases may lead to hypersensitivity.

What the Council can do

We can send a pest control officer to spray your house with an insecticide that will kill the fleas. The insecticide is not available to the general public.

Once the property has been sprayed, any cats or dogs you have must be kept out of the property until the spray has dried completely, which takes about two to four hours depending upon temperature.

After the property has been treated the carpets must not be vacuumed for 14 days. This is to ensure that fleas hatching out from recently-laid eggs, will be destroyed by the insecticide. You will continue to see live fleas for at least 10 days until all the eggs have hatched out.

Any cats or dogs must be treated for fleas at the same time in order to prevent re-infestation. Do not treat the cat or dog in the garden or on the floor. Stand the cat or dog in a dry bath or sink so that any fleas falling into the bath or sink can be washed away.

If a child drops a toy onto the floor wash the toy before giving it back to the child.

If you have a baby, it is advisable to put down a blanket, or something similar, before you let it crawl on the floor.

What you can do

By taking simple measures you may be able to control a minor flea infestation yourself:

- Thoroughly clean all infested clothing and bedding.
- Thoroughly clean the infested area by vacuuming carpet edges and soft furnishing and remove all accumulations which may act as a breeding site
- After vacuuming always throw the vacuum cleaner bag away or re-infestation will occur.
- Check your pets regularly for fleas and treat if necessary with a flea spray or flea collar. Regular use of a flea comb is also very effective.

Safety

All pesticides are applied by our qualified and experienced staff to ensure the safety of the public and to minimise damage to the environment.