



Animal House
Veterinary surgery

www.vetanimalhouse.co.uk
01788 575300

FLEAS

We are open seven days per week. Call us to book an appointment and for price of parasite control.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY PET HAS FLEAS?

If you see tiny little black things jumping around in the fur, commonly near the rump or back of the neck area then these are probably fleas. If you can't see anything but your pet is scratching a lot it could still be fleas. If people in your house have itchy bites, especially around the ankles then fleas could be responsible. The best test is to sit your pet on a sheet on newspaper and briskly rub or comb the fur up and down. If nothing drops off onto the paper then you may be in luck. If little bits of black, like soot, fall off then this could be evidence of fleas. Dilute the black bits with a drop of water. If it turns reddish then these are flea droppings.

Even if your pet does not have fleas it is wise to use anti-flea treatment as a preventative measure. Consider that animals can be allergic to flea bites so it is a good idea to prevent fleas rather than cure a flea problem.

HOW DO I GET RID OF FLEAS?

There are several effective products we can use. They are currently classed as prescription drugs so we're not allowed to advertise them but you may recognise their names. You have to see a vet in order to get them. Our recommended one, containing fipronil, can either be given in a small drop placed on the skin at the back of the neck or a liquid rubbed over the entire animal's fur. This kills the live fleas and the flea eggs which would hatch out later into more fleas if not handled in egg form. It is a very safe treatment which does not upset the animal. It is also effective against ticks and useful if your pet is travelling abroad as a preventative treatment against parasites. The alternative is a tablet or injection treatment (containing lufenuron) which does not kill the fleas but stops new ones hatching. This will eradicate a flea problem but not as immediately as the first option.

It is not enough to get the fleas off your pet. To prevent re-infestation you need to kill the fleas seeking sanctuary in your house. Fleas like to lurk along skirting boards waiting for their next warm host. You need to spray the house, all of it, with an insecticide designed specifically to be used in houses and specifically NOT to be used on an animal. Thorough Hoovering goes a long way to deter fleas but is not sufficient by itself if you have these visitors already.

WHERE ARE THE FLEAS COMING FROM?

They live inside our homes, outside and on other animals. They can lie dormant in a larvae stage for months. The dormant ones are set into action by heat and vibration so some one, or a pet walking across a carpet in a room unoccupied for months can activate the fleas who are eager for a warm body to feast off. Animals can bring them in from the garden. Gregarious animals can bring them home from other people's houses. Animals like to share their fleas, cats can pass them to dogs and vice versa. They cannot live on humans but they can bite us. Humans can get human fleas but these are not the ones that live on our pets. Unless your pet never leaves your house, you do not have animal visitors and your pet has never had fleas you are likely to have to address a flea problem.

CAN I USE OFF THE SHELF OR NATURAL REMEDIES?

You can if you wish but they will not be effective. The reason that the prescription drugs work is because they have enough of the active ingredient to actually kill the fleas and or the larvae and eggs. They are safe and effective as they have to pass rigorous safety standards. It is of course important that they are used correctly. Over the counter preparations do not contain sufficient effective ingredient and can be extremely harmful if not used correctly, (e.g. using a dog product on a cat in whatever dosage is nearly always fatal). Natural remedies are fabulous and to be encouraged, except in the case of flea eradication. They work on the basis that a pet will sweat out the ingredient, i.e. garlic, which the fleas find offensive on the skin. Pets do not sweat the way that humans do so there is no fur/skin saturation to upset the fleas.

© Animal House Vet Surgery 2006