

Pawsitive Press

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Itching, scratching 1
- Flea season 2
- Coupons 3

Related Webpages:



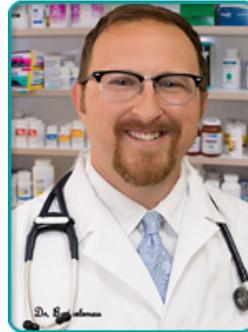
Animal Hospital OF DUNEDIN

Flea Products Online

Itching, scratching, and biting OH MY!

By: Dr. Michael Bartholomew, DVM

Spring has sprung here in Florida and so has allergy season. Ahhhh, the price of admission for living in paradise! While we never truly get a respite down here from allergies like our friends to the north do, springtime can definitely be troublesome for allergy sufferers. Just like us, dogs and sometimes cats, can be the victim of severe allergic disease. While we humans suffer from red eyes and the sneezes, pets often suffer from intense skin itching, called pruritus, which often leads to secondary infections with pathogens like bacteria and fungus. In the past, the only option for four legged severe allergy sufferers was oftentimes a course of steroids to break the intense itch that the pet was experiencing.



In recent years, there have been a number of developments in the world of allergy treatments but the most exciting is an injection called Cytopoint. Unlike steroids, Cytopoint does not suppress immune system function. Unfortunately, at this time, it is for dogs only (sorry kitties!) Cytopoint is what is known as monoclonal antibody therapy, which mimics the dog's own immune function. After being injected, it blocks the pathway that sends the itch signal to the brain giving the pet relief. This not only allows the dog relief from itching (and moms and dads to sleep) but also allows the skin to heal. While it does not replace antibiotics if there is a skin infection present or flea medications to

prevent flea infestations, it can provide peace for those dogs suffering with intense itch from environmental allergies. One injection will last up to a month, but for pets that need long term care with year round allergies, while they can receive monthly injections, this schedule is adapted to each individual pet and some pets may only need the injection every 8-10 weeks. The goal with these patients is to never let that itch return to a crescendo but to keep the pet happy and as itch free as possible.



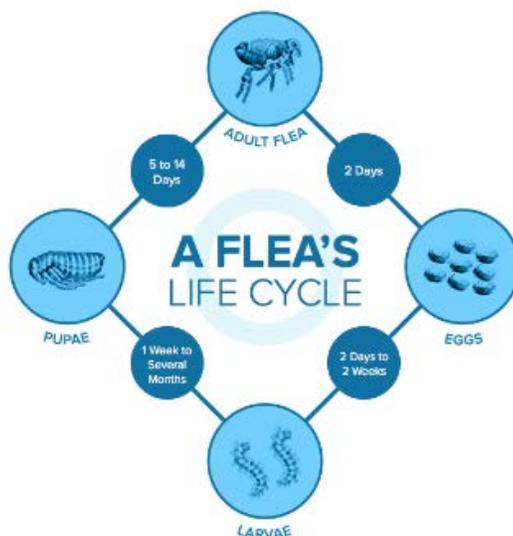
While we will never be able to eliminate allergies, this is an exciting step toward relieving discomfort and suffering in our four legged family members.



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Unfortunately, fleas are hardy parasites that, like many retirees, are attracted to Florida's warm and humid climate. In fact, fleas in our area can usually survive year round by living in a dormant state during the harshest days of winter. Although they may not be bothering your dog or cat during the brief period while hibernating, many of these creepy crawlers are just waiting for the right opportunity to attack.



How Did My Pet Get Fleas?

Your cat or dog got fleas from either direct or indirect contact with other flea-infested animals. That's right — fleas love to hitch a ride on any warm-blooded creature that happens by — including humans. So, we all become part of Florida's flea cycle, which means all pet owners should aggressively practice flea prevention and control.

Is There More Than One Kind of Flea?

Yes. There are over two thousand kinds of fleas. However, one particular species called the *Ctenocephalides Felis* or Cat Flea thrives in a warm, humid environment. That makes our area a natural breeding ground for fleas. Although cat fleas are common to Florida's feral cat population, they are not particular about their carrier and these pesky critters travel via stray dogs, skunks, raccoons, opossums, rodents and have been found on Florida panthers.

Can Fleas Harm My pet?

Yes. The most common problem that veterinarians treat is flea allergy. The areas of your pet skin can become irritated following a fleabite causing them to scratch or chew the skin, which often results in a secondary skin infection. Fleas also carry tapeworm larvae. If your pet swallows an infected flea while grooming, an adult tapeworm can grow in the dog's intestines.

When Should I Use Flea Prevention Products?

The ideal condition for flea infestations is between 65 and 80 degrees with 70 to 80 percent relative humidity. In our area of the country, that means flea prevention and control should be practiced year round. Your veterinarian can best determine which products should be prescribed based on where you live and your pet's medical history.

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