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# Flea Myths and Facts!

-Dr. Wes Sperry



Welcome to flea season. They are the true meaning of the word Pest, and can be a real problem to get rid of. Here are some flea control Myths, as well as tips to get rid of them.

**Myth 1:** If I don't see fleas, that means they are not a problem with my pet.

**Fact:** By the time you routinely see fleas on your pet, you already have a significant infestation in your house and/or yard. In a majority of cases you will not see the fleas on your pet. If your pet is flea allergic, it only takes one flea to make them lose their hair. This is doubly true in cats, which are such good self-groomers, that they clean all the fleas off before you can see them.

**Myth 2:** If I use a monthly preventative, it will repel the fleas and keep them from getting on my pet.

**Fact:** No monthly flea treatment is a repellent. Whether it is Frontline, Comfortis, Revolution, Advantage, or any other, there is very little if any repellent activity in any of the monthly preventatives. They do not make a good repellent. The fleas must get on your pet to be exposed to the medication, and with most products they must bite your pet to be exposed to the drug.

**Myth 3:** The monthly flea treatment will kill fleas instantly.

**Fact:** The monthly flea products take time to kill the fleas, none of them kill instantly. Depending on what product you use, and how long it has been since you applied the product, it will take from 4 to 12 hours for a flea to die after exposure. The fleas are exposed immediately, and therefore are dying, but will take time to actually die. Thus, seeing live fleas on your pet does not mean the product is not working.

**Myth 4:** My pet does not go outside enough to get fleas.

**Fact:** It only takes one flea piggybacking inside your house to start an infestation. If your pet goes outside at all, even for 5 seconds, it can be exposed to fleas. Furthermore, your pet DOES NOT HAVE TO GO OUTSIDE AT ALL to be exposed. Fleas will take a ride on your pants and shoes, come inside, and then go to your pet.

**Myth 5:** I have wood floors, so fleas cannot live in my house.

**Fact:** The truth is fleas can live just as easily on hardwood floors as they can on carpet.

**Myth 6:** Treating my pets is all I need to do.

**Fact:** The fleas you see on your pet are only 5% of the population; the other 95% of the fleas are eggs, pupae, and larvae in the environment. To

break the life cycle of fleas and get rid of them, it is important to treat your house and yard.



**Myth 7:** I only need to treat my pets for fleas during the summer.

**Fact:** If the winter is mild (like most winters in this area), then fleas will begin to populate outdoors in late winter/early spring. If you wait until the summer to start, you will be 3-4 months behind, and the fleas will already be established as an infestation. It is important to keep up with flea control through the winter, especially if you had a flea problem during the summer. This is EXTREMELY important if your pet is flea allergic.

**Myth 8:** If fleas are not biting me, then they must not be biting my pet either.

**Fact:** Fleas will preferentially go to your pets before you. Until the fleas have saturated the pets and are fighting for space to live/feed, they will stay on them and leave you alone. If you are getting bit, chances are there is already a heavy infestation.

## Helpful Tips

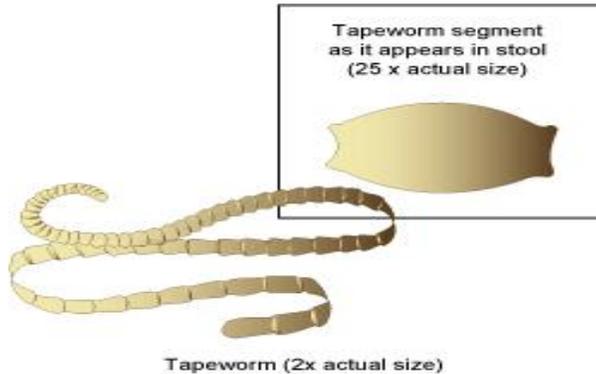
This has been one of the worst flea seasons in recent memory due to the fact that we had no winter to kill them off. Here are some tips to help:

1. Use your products properly. If you are using a monthly topical product, do not bathe the pet 2 days before or 2 days after applying, and make sure to apply to skin and not just the hair.



2. Treat all the pets in the household. If one is not treated, the fleas will go to that pet. You must break the life cycle of the flea to get them under control. Having untreated pets gives them a place to feed and lay new eggs.
3. Fleas can be introduced into a controlled environment (yard, etc) by wildlife. Stray cats, opossums, raccoons, etc will drop flea eggs, which then hatch and get on your pet.
4. Flea shampoos only kill the fleas on your pet at that time, they do not kill fleas that get on them after the bath, do not repel, and do not last a month.
5. Remember, seeing a live flea on your pet does not mean your product is not working. It often means that there is an infestation in the environment, and new fleas keep getting on your pet. In this case, treating the house and yard is crucial.
6. Flea collars do not work.
7. Flea sprays do not have significant residual effects.
8. Products using pyrethrins or permethrins like Hartz and Seargents do not last more than a few days.
9. If you are dealing with an overwhelming infestation, try using your monthly flea control product every 3 weeks until they are under control.

10. Fleas carry a parasite called a tapeworm. These are passed when your pet ingests a flea carrying a worm. They are detected by noting small, white sections of the worm (they look like grains of rice) on your pet's stool or on the hair around your pet's bottom. If you see these, contact us.



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11. Check out our [flea control handout](#) on the website for more information.
12. If you have any questions, or are just having a difficult time with fleas, please don't hesitate to call us or come in.