

Flea Hunting in the Kennel

Hunting fleas is difficult, but it can be impossible if you do not know how they live. The adult female is simply an egg-laying machine, laying 50 to 100 eggs a day! Before they die, females can lay several thousand eggs, which fall off the pet into the environment.

For every 1 adult flea seen on your pet, the environment around your pet has 50 eggs and 45 larvae and pupae! Eggs hatch in less than a week, and these larvae will feed on flea dirt and debris. Larvae spin a cocoon before entering the pupae stage, where they wait.

Inside the cocoon, the pupae are protected from insecticide and toxins. They're located out of the way, under chairs or containers where they are protected from sunlight. Plus, they anchor to the carpet, grass or kennel, making mechanical vacuuming useless. If needed, they can stay in the pupae stage for a year. Pupae are stimulated to "hatch" by vibrations in the area or carbon dioxide. Timing allows adults to emerge when they have the best chance of finding a mammal to feed on.



Adults emerge hungry, and they will feed and mate as soon as they find a host. Fleas feed several times a day for up to 4 hours each time, which they can do because their saliva has a protein that prevents the blood from clotting. This saliva protein is also the reason for flea allergies, which causes the pet to scratch and tear at their skin. Adult fleas pass pepper-looking feces called flea dirt, which is digested blood. Flea dirt is a rich food for the larvae in the environment, and it will turn red on a white paper towel if you wet it.

So how do you hunt down these pests and get rid of them? Treatment failure commonly occurs in the environment. If you only treat the adults on your dogs and not the environment, 95% of the fleas will go untouched. Adults are killed and easily replaced with the remaining pupae. That means it's important to set a game plan.

Vacuum the kennel areas that are not hosed down, especially under tables, chairs and shelving, then dispose of the vacuumed contents in a plastic bag. This removes the flea adults and eggs in the area. [Wash](#) the kennel, scrub the inside runs and clean under everything. [Spray the environment](#) with an insecticide that contains an IGR (Insect Growth Regulator), which is the only way to get rid of pupae. The IGR is a flea hormone that prevents the pupae from maturing, and they die in the cocoon. This is critical – make sure you spray under the furniture, shelving and whelping boxes. Most products today are safe for your dogs, but as a precaution, let them dry before putting your dog back in the environment. This only takes a few minutes.

Bathe or spray the dog with a [flea spray or shampoo](#) and treat the dog with a [monthly product](#) to prevent re-infestation. You will not be able to get all the pupae the first time, but the next month's application will take care of the new adults. Make sure you re-apply the treatment each month. Be careful when bringing a new dog in, because you don't know its flea status. As a precaution, it's a good idea to spray them with a [pyrethrin spray](#). Though these sprays only last 24 hours, they are safe and effective to give you extra insurance against fleas.

[Spray](#) the exercise yard with an insecticide. When fighting flea issues, sprays with permethrin or a cypermethrin are effective. Spray up on the building and kennel with the dogs locked inside. Wildlife, rabbits, squirrels and feral cats are a big source of fleas in your area so building a barrier around your kennel in the spring and fall is important.

The materials, information and answers provided through this article are not intended to replace the medical advice or services of a qualified veterinarian or other pet health care professional. Consult your own veterinarian for answers to specific medical questions, including diagnosis, treatment, therapy or medical attention. Not to be used without permission of Revival Animal Health.