



# Fleas



## Why are fleas a pest?

Fleas are parasitic insects and different species live on particular animals i.e. cat fleas and dog fleas. The human flea is very rare in the UK due to improved hygiene and standards of living. Surveys have shown that most fleas found in the home are cat fleas. Fleas are visible to the naked eye and are reddish in colour. They are instantly recognisable by their extremely long hind legs and flattened shape. This allows them to move quickly through hairs. Infestations can spread quickly especially as a female can lay up to 50 eggs a day. Most eggs will fall off the pet and hatch wherever they are in the house, usually where the pet sleeps. Only a small number of the flea population in a house will be on the animal at a given time.

Flea eggs can lay dormant for long periods of time but will be stimulated by vibration and heat. When this happens an adult flea will emerge and seek food (often your ankle). This is why people can experience flea bites when they move in to a property that has been vacant for some time.

## Signs of fleas

Signs of fleas are very distinctive. If you have an infestation of fleas you may have some of the following problems:

- Flea bites - these will show as a swollen itching spot with a single puncture point at the centre.
- They are usually found where clothes are in close contact with the body e.g. ankles. Bites often appear in clusters or lines of two bites, and can remain itchy and inflamed for up to several weeks
- Scratching pets - pets scratching more than usual and on inspection you find fleas or small black flecks
- Sightings of fleas - you may actually see fleas in your home, on yourself or on your pets



## How to prevent an infestation

Following the below tips can help prevent you getting fleas in your home:

- Ensure pets are regularly treated for fleas. "Spot On" is a treatment which can be provided by vets. Once applied to the animal's skin it will provide protection from fleas (and other pests) for up to two months. A vet should be consulted for the correct treatment for your animal
- Vacuum living areas including furniture on a regular basis
- Regularly vacuum areas where any animals sleep (disposing of the bag/ contents into an outside bin)
- Wash bedding and animal bedding in a hot wash regularly

## Control Measures

### How to treat an infestation

If you find that you have fleas in your home contact the Environmental Health Department on 01442 228543/ 228455, or email [pestcontrol@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:pestcontrol@dacorum.gov.uk)