



KEEP

FLEAS

OFF YOUR PETS AND OUT OF YOUR HOME

CONTROL FLEAS IN YOUR HOME WITH THESE ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

Borate-based carpet treatments

Ecology Works Dustmite and Flea Control (powder to mix with water), Ecology Works Dustmitex Pre-mixed Spray

Desiccating dust containing diatomaceous earth (DE)

Concern Diatomaceous Earth Crawling Insect Killer, Safer Brand Ant and Crawling Insect Killer—Diatomaceous Earth, St. Gabriel Organics Insect Dust Diatomaceous Earth

Flea trap

Enforcer Over Nite Flea Trap, Enforcer Over Nite Flea and Insect Trap, Victor The Ultimate Flea Trap

Insecticidal soaps for outdoor application

Products by Bonide, Garden Safe, Safer Brand

Applicator for diatomaceous earth (DE)

Pest Pistol

FINDING FLEAS IN THE HOME

Adult fleas spend almost all of their time on an animal's body. If you haven't seen fleas but your dog or cat is scratching, your pet may have fleas.

You may be able to see tiny white flea eggs and white, worm-like flea larvae on the floor, in cracks and crevices, in carpets, and where pets rest or sleep. You may also see "flea dirt" (flea droppings) where your pet sleeps. These black specks contain blood, and turn red when wet.

If you think you have a flea problem but don't have pets, flea traps can help you be sure.

CONTROLLING FLEAS

Inside Your Home

- **Wash your pet with warm soapy water.** No need to use flea soap—a good bath with pet shampoo will work. Using a flea comb while your pet is lathered should get rid of most fleas on your pet.
- **Use a flea comb (available at pet stores) often** to catch fleas crawling on your cat or dog. Drown fleas caught in the comb in a cup of warm soapy water and flush or pour down the drain. Make sure to comb well around the neck and base of the tail.
- **Vacuum carpets, floors, and couches and chairs often** to pick up adult fleas and eggs. Clean cracks and

Fleas make pets and people uncomfortable, and can transmit tapeworms to pets and sometimes to children.

It takes about 18 days for a flea egg to grow into an adult flea. Adult fleas can live on your pet for 30 to 40 days. Fleas lay 20 to 50 eggs each day, so flea problems in your home can get out of control quickly, especially in warm weather.

crevices in floors or baseboards, or seal permanently with caulk.

- **Use a non-toxic flea trap** to attract fleas and trap them on sticky paper. Traps work better if people and pets are not around—fleas prefer warm bodies to traps.
- **Wash pet bedding in hot soapy water every week.**
- **Use diatomaceous earth (DE) to treat carpets, chairs, couches, and pet bedding.** Use a hand duster to apply a thin layer of DE (labeled for use on pests) and blow it into cracks and crevices. Wear a dust mask and goggles to keep DE out of your lungs and eyes!
- **Use borate-based carpet treatments.** The recommended products can control fleas in carpeting for up to a year. Be careful not to inhale borate powder. Borate mixed with water is less harmful to your lungs than borate applied as a dust.

Choose eco-friendly products for your home and garden. Look for this symbol before you buy.



Outdoors

- **Don't treat for fleas outdoors unless you know you have a major problem there.** Check by walking around areas where animals rest, sleep, or pass through. Wear white socks. If fleas jump onto your socks, you'll know it.
- **Check for animals** like raccoons or opossums nesting under the house or porch. Dead animals can be the source of a flea infestation. Treat nests under the house with diatomaceous earth.
- **Do not try to combat fleas by spraying around the perimeter of your house or spraying your entire yard.** Spot-treat with insecticidal soap only those areas where you find large populations of fleas. Fleas are more likely to be on an animal or inside your home.
- **Apply beneficial nematodes** (*Heterorhabditis bacteriophora* or *Steinernema carpocapse*) to soil where you have found fleas. You can buy them at garden centers or order online. Soil temperature must be between 60°F and 90°F, and the soil should be moist. Water before and after application, but don't soak the area.

FLEA MEDICATIONS FOR YOUR PET

It's just as important to kill the fleas on your pet as it is to get rid of the fleas in your home. Be sure you know what is in the products you choose and how they work. Always read the label and follow instructions carefully!

- Medications containing **permethrin** are toxic to cats. If you treat your dog with a product containing permethrin (used to control ticks), keep your cat away from the dog for 24 hours.
- Flea control products containing **pyrethroids** (ingredient names often ending in "-thrin") may poison pets.
- Some medications should not be used on puppies, pregnant females, or sick or old pets. Ask your veterinarian what is safe for your pet.
- Some brands of medicine may not work as well as they did in the past because fleas are becoming resistant to them. Ask your veterinarian for a recommendation.
- Be sure you use the right amount for your type of pet (dog or cat) and his or her weight. Don't divide a large-animal dose between two smaller pets.

Spot-on flea treatments

These are applied once a month to a pet's skin, between the shoulder blades and at the back of the neck where the animal won't be able to lick off the pesticide. The chemical spreads all over the body.

Most flea medicines will not wash off, but if your dog is a swimmer, read the product label to be sure it's waterproof. Don't apply a "spot-on" flea control product just before you bathe your pet.

- **Activyl:** Active ingredient indoxacarb. Kills all life stages of fleas.
- **Activyl Plus:** Contains indoxacarb and permethrin (to kill ticks)—must not be used on cats.
- **Advantage:** Active ingredient imidacloprid. Kills adult fleas, eggs, and larvae.
- **Frontline:** Contains fipronil. Kills adult fleas and ticks. Some Frontline products also contain methoprene, which keeps flea eggs, larvae, and pupae from becoming adults.
- **K9 Advantix (for dogs):** Contains imidacloprid and permethrin. Kills fleas, ticks, and lice, and repels mosquitoes and biting flies.
- **Revolution:** Contains selamectin. Kills adult fleas and eggs, the American dog tick, and some mites; prevents heartworm and controls roundworms and hookworms in cats.

Pills

- **Capstar:** Contains nitenpyram. Give daily as needed. Kills adult fleas beginning in about 30 minutes.
- **Program:** Contains lufenuron. Give once a month. Stops flea eggs from growing into adults, but does not kill adult fleas or ticks.

Fipronil, indoxacarb, imidacloprid, and permethrin and other pyrethroids are all chemicals known to cause water quality problems when they reach a local creek, river, bay, or the ocean. This list of flea medications for pets does not imply endorsement of any product by Our Water Our World or any of our participating agencies.



WWW.OURWATEROURWORLD.ORG

Common home and garden pesticides are found in stormwater runoff, treated wastewater, and in local waterways, sometimes at levels that can harm sensitive aquatic life. **Our Water Our World** is a joint effort by water pollution prevention agencies, participating retail stores, and pesticide distributors and manufacturers—working together to reduce the risks associated with pesticide use.

Our Water Our World fact sheets and store displays educate residents about less-toxic pest management. For the rest of the series of fact sheets, visit www.OurWaterOurWorld.org. Look for the **Less Toxic • Eco-friendly** tag next to less-toxic products in participating stores and nurseries. See the *Pesticides and Water Pollution* fact sheet for information on active ingredients in common pesticides that may cause water quality problems.

Pest control strategies and methods described in this publication are consistent with integrated pest management (IPM) concepts, and are based on scientific studies and tests in actual home and garden settings. Use suggested products according to label directions and dispose of unwanted or leftover pesticides at a household hazardous waste collection facility or event. For more information on pesticide disposal, visit www.earth911.com. No endorsement of specific brand name products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned.

For more information, contact:

Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC), 510.524.2567, www.birc.org
University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners in your area
University of California IPM website, www.ipm.ucdavis.edu