



# City of Westminster

## Pest Information

**FREE PHONE:  
0800 3580514**

### Fleas



#### What do they look like?

Adult fleas are normally 1-4mm long, brownish in colour, without wings but with powerful legs adapted for jumping and piercing, sucking mouthparts. Their bodies are covered with backward projecting spines that help them move between the hairs on the host animal. Cat and dog fleas are usually found together and are similar in appearance. Female fleas can live up to two years, during which time they can lay up to 1000 eggs each. The female cat flea's head is twice as long as it is wide. Both cat and dog fleas have a row of very heavy spines on the front of the head (genal comb) and on the back part of the first body segment (pronotal comb). Cat and dog flea larvae are  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long when fully developed and look much like fly maggots. They have 13 body segments, are a dirty-white colour with backward projecting hairs on each body segment. They also have a pair of hook-like appendages on the last abdominal segment.

### Where do they live?

Adult fleas live exclusively as parasites of warm-blooded animals. The females lay their eggs close to or on the infested animal. Wall – to – wall carpeting and soft furnishings also provide a relatively undisturbed environment for fleas to develop. They can also live in cracks and crevices in bare floors.

### How much of a pest are they?

*Disease transmission* : Fleas are not thought to transmit any serious illness to humans.

*Flea bites* : Although not all people are affected by flea bites, they can cause severe irritation.

### What do they eat and what is the life cycle?

Larvae feed on debris and adult flea droppings. Adult fleas feed solely on blood with their piercing and sucking mouthparts. Cat and dog fleas prefer feeding on cats and dogs, but also feed on humans. Cat and dog fleas go through complete metamorphosis. The females lay four to eight eggs after each blood meal. The eggs fall into the nest of the host animal or wherever the animal happens to be at that time. The eggs hatch in about 10 days but, can lay dormant for several months. The life cycle of Fleas can make them difficult pests to eradicate and several treatments may be necessary. The Oothica (egg case) is impervious to all known pesticides and it is this reason why some infestations can last for prolonged periods.

### Can I get rid of Fleas myself?

Yes, you can control flea infestations through several other methods:

*Hygiene* - regular cleaning, particularly with a vacuum cleaner, will help prevent the build-up of infestation by removing eggs and larvae from floors, furniture and where pets sleep.

*Treatment of pets* - in order to achieve effective control, pets must also be treated with a product approved for veterinary use such as 'Frontline' a liquid droplet harmlessly applied to the back of domestic cats & dogs.

*Chemical* - the standard treatment for infested premises is the application of a residual insecticide, either as a powder or a liquid spray. The insecticide is applied to all floor surfaces.

Note: these areas must then not be vacuumed or washed for at least 10 days after the treatment, or longer if possible

**When using pesticides always follow the instructions on the label.**

### How can I get rid of Garden Ants?

Call City of Westminster Council Pest Control Team **Free Phone 0800 3580514**.

### Treatment

The officer will explain the procedure for the application of the treatment and answer any queries you may have. Typically, these may consist of the applications of sprays, powder or Ultra Low Volume (mist or 'fogging' pesticides). In addition the officer will give you advice on what you can do to self help. You should avoid vacuum cleaning the treated area for approximately a week.

### Health & Safety

If treatments are to be carried out you will be issued with a 'Notice to Occupier' form detailing important and Health & Safety information. You are required to sign for these forms. All pesticides used by us have been passed by DEFRA. It is the policy of this unit to use the safest and least toxic chemicals that have the minimal impact on the environment. Whilst providing the most effective and efficient treatment of infestations. You may remain present during the application of 'gels' and bait stations. However, **In the case of spray applications it is preferable that you vacate the premises for approximately 20 minutes. Or, In the case of Ultra Low Volume (ULV) applications you must vacate the premises for approximately 2 – 4 hours**

All efforts are made to place pesticides in the safest locations, the type of pest and layout of dwellings often dictate the actual positions of pesticides. It is **your** responsibility to ensure children and pets are kept well away from pesticides. **(Fish tanks are to be covered during treatment).**

### Post Treatment

Most Flea treatment applications work by attacking the nervous system of the flea and provide a residual active effect for at least six to twelve weeks. The increase in activity may occur for a short period after each treatment and sporadically occur thereafter as the eggs hatch. This is why residual treatments are used to cover this period. Depending on the circumstances most Flea infestations take between three to six weeks to control (although some infestations can take up to 12 weeks).

**Failing to report** a Flea infestation is not wise; Fleas do not disappear of their own accord. If you believe you have a Flea infestation in your property, please contact City of Westminster Council Pest Control Team.