



## FACT SHEET

### Fleas – The Basics

- Fleas are nasty little insects which bite, feed on blood and lay eggs.
- Fleas can only lay eggs after eating animal blood, so they cannot multiply in the absence of a pet.
- Adult fleas live for up to four weeks on a pet.
- Female fleas can lay up to 50 eggs a day continually while on your pet.
- Flea eggs, which are 0.5mm long, shiny and opalescent, easily drop to the carpet base or roll into cracks in the ground. There they hatch in 2-4 days into legless larvae.
- Flea larvae feed on debris and flea faeces for 4-8 days before building an impenetrable cocoon around themselves.
- Flea cocoons are very resistant to chemicals, moisture and predators and attach themselves to carpet fibres so firmly they cannot be vacuumed up.
- In the cocoon the larvae develop into fleas, but they only hatch out under conditions of high humidity, warm temperature and vibration.
- In optimal conditions fleas can emerge from cocoons within just two weeks, but some cocoons might not hatch for up to nine months.
- The new flea will hop around near where it hatched for up to three days, waiting to find an animal to feed on. Occasionally, in desperation, they will attack a human.
- Fleas carry the flea tapeworm cyst, which if eaten by animal or human, will develop into an intestinal tapeworm.
- A large percentage of dogs and cats develop an allergy to flea saliva called flea allergy dermatitis. This leads to inflamed, itchy skin, mainly over the rump.
- Severe flea infestations can lead to anaemia and death, particularly in young or very old pets.

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