

The 3-Step Plan to Natural Flea Control

Why Chemical Pesticides Actually Bring More Fleas

Each flea season, pet owners begin to dip, spray, spot-treat, medicate, shampoo, powder, and collar their dogs and cats with potent pesticides in an effort to kill fleas. When new fleas appear, they trigger another round of flea-killing poisons. This continual toxic exposure pollutes the liver and wreaks havoc with the immune system, making the now weakened animal a bigger flea magnet than ever. Another negative result is that the fleas that do survive the chemical assault become insecticide-resistant "superfleas."

A saner approach to flea control is to get rid of fleas from your animal and your home without poisons, while building your pet's natural resistance to fleas with supplements and a good diet. Occasionally, a spot treatment may be necessary to deal with an infestation, but other, health-building methods should be put into play at the same time to reduce reliance on this more hazardous chemical route.

Diet alone plays a surprisingly large part in flea-proofing your pet, so don't overlook the importance of feeding a high quality all-natural food, and adding some immune-building raw foods to your pet's diet. Natural flea control takes consistent effort over time, but it's ultimately far more successful than the pesticidal alternatives.

Use a Flea Comb to Test for Fleas

Not every itchy animal has fleas! Many pets that start scratching in warm weather have seasonally triggered allergies that can be helped with special allergy foods, digestive enzymes, and other supplements. To check for the presence of fleas, comb around the groin area and base of the tail. A flea comb has very finely spaced teeth to capture live fleas and the tiny egg sacs that cling to your pet's hair. Even if you don't see any fleas, you may find flea dirt, black specks of digested blood that fleas excrete on your pet. Flea dirt indicates the presence of fleas, and leaves a red trail as it dissolves in a glass of water.

Step 1: Healthy from the Inside - Supplements for Flea Resistance

The long term solution to fleas is to make your pet an unappealing host. Flea resistance starts from within, in the inner workings of the immune system. Like other parasites, fleas are Nature's scavengers, attacking the weakest and most vulnerable, thinning out the herd to preserve the food supply for the healthy. Because of their weaker immune systems, the old, the young, and the sick are a flea's primary targets, and certain biological "markers" draw them. Low vitality and poor immune function attracts fleas, and a strong, vital life force repels them.

Your pet's first line of defense is healthy skin. The natural oils in supple, unbroken skin make it harder for fleas to bite, and skin oils can plug up fleas' breathing holes. Dry, flaky, or broken skin is a flea's delight. Whatever improves skin condition will help flea proof your animal. This is where supplements come in.

The most important nutrients for flea resistance and good skin condition are **nutritional sulfur**, **essential fatty acids**, and **digestive enzymes**. Dietary sulfur, a building block of many amino acids, is an internal flea repellent and a biological marker for good health. In sufficient quantity, sulfur imparts a scent to the skin that keeps fleas away. **Body Guard** is an excellent supplement created with flea repellency in mind that contains easily absorbed nutritional sulfur. It also dramatically improves the health and appearance of the skin and coat.

Essential fatty acids (EFAs) bathe the skin cells in conditioning fats. In addition to promoting stronger, more resilient skin, they reduce flaking, shedding, skin inflammation due to flea allergies and improve immune system function. We recommend **Everybody's Best Friend Supplement**, or **Grizzly Salmon Oil**. **BodyGuard** itself contains lecithin, a good source of fatty acids, and does not require an additional EFA supplement.

Because they greatly enhance the utilization of all nutrients, **digestive enzymes** improve the effectiveness of any nutritional flea remedy, helping it to work faster and more completely. Enzymes are a must for serious fleabite allergies! Our own brand, **Enzymes Plus** is a combination of highly potent, plant-grown digestive enzymes, natural Vitamin C from rosehips, and kelp, containing naturally occurring trace minerals that catalyze enzymatic activity.

Results of this supplementation program will be visible in two to six weeks, depending on your pet's age, health, and size. Using these supplements year round will improve overall health and prevent fleas gaining a toehold at the beginning of each new flea season.

Step 2: Remove Fleas From Your Pet Without Poisons

Using a chemical pesticide directly on your pet, whether a spot treatment, spray, or dip, is never completely safe. Chemical flea collars are especially dangerous, radiating nerve poisons that pass into your system as well as your pet's. Topical products contain central nervous system toxins that can be absorbed through the skin and ingested when animals lick themselves. Even if a toxic product is used occasionally for its "quick kill" results, switching to safer natural means as soon as fleas are under control is the wisest course. Sick, weak, or very young animals should never be treated with pesticides. Fortunately, Mother Nature has provided some natural substances that can eliminate fleas safely. Our favorite methods and substances are discussed below.

Fleacombing, Spraying, Powdering, and Shampooing

Fleacombing removes live fleas crawling on your pet, along with any flea dirt and eggs. **Shampooing** drowns fleas, and washes away the skin flakes that attract more fleas. Shampoo with a non-drying shampoo to protect the beneficial oils building up on the skin. If your pet's skin is very damaged, dilute the shampoo with an equal amount of healing **aloe vera** liquid or gel from a health food store.

The best herbal means of getting rid of fleas on your pets are products containing various insect-repelling essential oils: neem, cedar, orange, citronella, pennyroyal, eucalyptus and lavender. Neem oil, from the bark of a tree in India, both kills and repels fleas and ticks. Neem oil is the active ingredient in **Ark Naturals Neem Protect Shampoo** and **Spray**. Other effective products are **Buddy Wash Flea Shampoo**, and **Buddy Splash** flea spray with neem oil, cedarwood and soothing aloe vera, and **Doc Ackerman's Shampoo**, and **Powder** with oils of pennyroyal, citronella, and eucalyptus. Some animals, especially cats, can be sensitive to the more pungent oils or higher concentrations of them, so apply carefully, especially around the head. Drooling or excess salivation is a common indication that the mixture is too strong. You can try diluting with water to reduce the pungency.

Step 3: Treat Your Indoor Environment

If you see fleas crawling on your animal, you can be sure that there are more hidden somewhere in your home. Adult fleas lay eggs on their host which eventually drop off to hatch in the places where your pet walks or lies down. The carpeting and furniture become the "nursery" where baby fleas develop into adults before hopping back on to feed. If you can eliminate the eggs and larvae, the adults will soon disappear as well. Even when using a pesticidal spot treatment (which can have a suppressing effect on the immune system), it's still important to use some type of premise control for new fleas carried in from outside.

Borate crystals are our environmental treatment of choice due to its safety, ease of use, and effectiveness. For many households, this is all the flea control needed if used early in the season. The fine borate powder is sprinkled into carpeting, flooring, and upholstery where it is virtually undetectable. There it kills larvae and eggs by a mechanical process of abrasion and dehydration. Unlike conventional poisons, fleas cannot become immune to the effects. One treatment is guaranteed to kill fleas for an entire year. **Fleago** borate crystals are not toxic to people, pets, or plants. After applying, allow 2 to 3 weeks for fleas to disappear. **Pyrethrum powder** derived from flower petals can be used on floors and carpets as well as on animals, and can sometimes be found in gardening stores. Sprinkle lightly in the house and in your vacuum bag to kill hatching larvae.

What About Spot Treatments?

We don't recommend any of the monthly spot treatments as a permanent solution to fleas because they contribute to the toxic load the body must eliminate in order to remain healthy. But during an infestation, even the most careful pet guardians may occasionally resort to their use. If you use one, limit it to one application to get the flea population down to zero, and then launch a non-toxic program of improved diet, flea supplements, and indoor environmental controls.

Cautions: Never use a spot treatment on a sick animal, or use in combination with other chemical pesticides, such as a dip or a spray. Discontinue use if you notice lethargy, foaming at the mouth, or skin irritation and hair loss at the application site. Cats have more side effects than dogs, and some cats such as Persians and Himalayans, should not be treated at all. On any animal, whether dog or cat, you can try a partial dose and wait a day or two to gauge the effect before using the entire tube.

ALL THE BEST PET CARE

8050 Lake City Way (206) 524-0199 • 2713 E. Madison St (206) 329-8565 • 2127 Queen Anne Av N (206) 283-3959
13510 Aurora Av (206) 267-5090 • 16701 Cleveland St, Redmond (425) 881-2232 • 1590 NW Gilman Blvd, Issaquah (425) 369-8383
www.allthebestpetcare.com