

{ LIFE CYCLE: *Fleas*

Any pet owner who's had trouble with fleas on their dog or cat knows how quickly an infestation of these pint-sized pests can spiral out of control. But how does it go from one flea to hundreds—even thousands—so quickly?

Here's a breakdown of the flea life cycle from egg to adult:

1. Egg. Eggs are deposited on the pet and fall into the environment within a few hours.

2. Larva. Larvae are maggot-like and approximately 0.5 cm long. They feed on blood in adult flea feces, organic debris, flea eggshells and other flea larvae.

> Flea larvae develop outdoors in cool, shady areas where pets rest as well as indoors in undisturbed, protected sites such as in carpet, under furniture and along baseboards.

3. Pupa. Whitish cocoons can be found in soil, on vegetation, in carpets, under furniture and on animal bedding.

> Adults emerge about eight days after formation of the cocoon. All fleas usually emerge by day 13, depending on temperature and relative humidity.

4. Adult. Adults begin feeding immediately when on a pet—usually within three minutes.

> Egg production begins within 20 to 24 hours of females taking their first blood meal.

> Female fleas can produce 40 to 50 eggs per day—that's nearly 3,000 fleas in two months!

> During the warm summer months, the entire flea life cycle can be completed in two to three weeks.

