**FLEAS!**

Well its that time again…flea season! Although fleas can and do infest some pets and households year-round the majority of flea complaints occur late Summer and into Fall. Are you pets scratching? An easy way to check for fleas is to place your pet (cat, dog, rabbit, ferret) on a white sheet and vigorously rub them. If you see small black specs, some of which will be curly this is most likely flea manure which indicates there are adult fleas on the pet. When I do this for clients I put a few of the black specs on a wet cotton ball. If it is flea manure it will turn red as flea manure is just digested blood from your pet.

The most important thing in combating a flea problem is to treat not only the pets but also the home. There are four stages to the flea life cycle. The adult flea accounts for only 5% of the problem. These are usually found on the pets. Female fleas can lay 50 eggs a day and 2000 eggs during their life. These fall off into the carpet and hatch into very small maggots or larvae which can crawl up to 35 feet. They feed on the flea manure (digested blood) in the carpet and then become a cocoon. Unfortunately, there are no products that can kill this stage. These cocoons then hatch into the adult flea which will preferably jump onto you pets and continue this cycle. It obviously does not take much time before a flea problem can get way out of control!

There are many good flea products today. **Vectra 3D**, Frontline, Advantage, and **Revolution** are some veterinary prescription strength topical flea products that last 4-6 weeks. **Sentinel** is a prescription heartworm preventative for dogs that also sterilizes adult fleas and will therefore help with flea control. Flea sprays can work well although are much more time consuming as most need to be applied twice a week. Flea collars, flea powders, and flea dips are not recommended much anymore as there are much easier and/or safer products today**. If a flea problem is diagnosed, I recommend clients wash all pet bedding, vacuum the home thoroughly, discard the vacuum bag then treat all floor surfaces with a good quality home flea control premise spray with an igr (insect growth regulator)then use a good monthly topical product\*\* on all pets.** As always, follow specific product instructions and be cautious in use around birds, fish, small children, etc. One can also treat the outside environment. It is important to treat under decks, bushes, trees, etc. I have seen various yard treatments at local hardware and home improvement stores. For additional information please contact your veterinarian.

**\*\* We highly recommend using/purchasing Vectra 3D + Sentinel for dogs and Revolution for cats and using monthly.**

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