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## **Is that a flea?**

Fleas are one of the most common problems seen within practice and, once noticed, tend to already be a major problem around the home. Once a problem is noticed, 5% of fleas will tend to be on the pet, with the remaining 95% in the environment. It is also very difficult to spot a healthy flea; they are great at hiding even when you look for them! This means they are likely to be in your carpets, in your furnishing and even attempting to make a meal out of you!

Flea saliva is very allergenic and as well as the typical itching seen on most pets with fleas, for some animals it can cause a severe skin problem called flea allergic dermatitis. Fleas also suck blood, meaning if there is a really severe infestation the affected animal can become anaemic and even, in some puppies and kittens, die from blood loss. The droppings left by the fleas are one of the key ways of spotting if there is a problem.

Each female flea, once it has had a blood meal, lays a massive number of eggs that fall off the animal and into the environment. This is one of the reasons that infestations occur so readily. The fact that these eggs can lay dormant in the environment means that any animal can easily come into contact with and potentially be infected by fleas.

Once the eggs fall off, they hatch into larvae that will burrow down into carpet pile or between floorboards. This means that it is very difficult to get rid of them completely once they take hold.

Good quality flea treatments are important; many of the cheaper flea treatments do not kill fleas, simply repel them. This means you are still likely to find problems and will need to spend more in the long run to solve the problem. Some will also cover your pet against ticks. If your pet does get a tick please do not try to remove it yourself, this can lead to the tick leaving its mouthparts in your pet and complicating the problem further!

It is also very important to regularly wash all your pets bedding on a hot wash to ensure no eggs or larvae are living in the bedding.

If you think your pet may have fleas please contact us at the surgery where we can advise you on the best treatments for both your pet and the house.

**If you need any other information or wish to discuss any of the issues here further, please contact one of the nursing team at the Vale Veterinary Group Ltd, Kidderminster  
01562 822692**