

# Fleas!

## What are fleas and why should I worry about them?

Fleas are a very common parasite that infest pets and their environments. Fleas cause itchy bites, hair loss and discomfort in most pets. Cats usually get fleas from coming into contact with other animals or environments that have fleas. Some cats are even allergic to flea saliva and droppings causing a condition called Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD see additional handout). In addition, fleas carry tapeworms and cats become infested with tapeworms during grooming. Fleas will even bite humans (but they prefer animals).

## How can I tell if my cat has fleas?

Fleas are very small and they move fast! You may not be able to see them even if your cat has them. However, you can often find “flea dirt” (or flea droppings), which looks like black dirt close to the skin, when you part the hair in warm areas on the body or in your cat’s bedding. Brushing your cat with a flea comb over a white surface may also help you to find evidence of an infestation.



## How do I get rid of them?

The best way to keep fleas from causing a problem is to prevent infestation with a regular flea preventative. Advantage is a reputable over the counter (OTC) brand you can get at pet stores or online. Your veterinarian can help you make a treatment/ prevention plan for your pets.

*\*\*\*Always consult your vet and read labels carefully before using any flea product. Some OTC products can be toxic to cats.\*\*\**

Treatment of an infestation includes an effective flea preventative given regularly to **each pet in the household**, washing bedding in hot water, vacuuming entire home (furniture and floors), and using some method to kill fleas in the home environment (e.g. spray or “flea bomb” when pets are safely out of the house). These steps often need to be repeated regularly to fully clear an infestation. Bathing alone is not usually effective although can provide comfort.

## **What about community cats or ferals?**

While permanently eliminating fleas in free-roaming cats is not possible, providing even one month of protection at the time of surgery can relieve suffering and improve their quality of life.

## **What does FCSNP offer to treat fleas?**

**Revolution:** A topical medication that kills fleas already on the cat and protects the cat for 30 days. This medication also treats some intestinal parasites, ear mites, and lice, although multiple doses may be needed.

**Praziquantel:** We offer an injection of praziquantel, a dewormer, which kills the tapeworms associated with flea infestation. This medication does not provide continuing protection.

These treatments may be given at the time of surgery only and only if requested by the cat’s caretaker at the time of check in.