

Holistic - FLEA SHAMPOO

Unless you have a serious infestation, flea shampoos with conditioners, preferably holistic, are safer choices.

If you are treating your dog with one of the external or internal flea products (i.e. Front Line, FLplus, Advantix, Revolution) consult with your Veterinarian before using a flea shampoo. Don't Over Do It! Less is better.

There are many non-toxic flea shampoo products on the market. Most flea shampoos contain pyrethrums. This is extracted from a flower grown largely in Africa. This plant is related to the ragweed and can cause allergic reactions. In order to maximize effectiveness, it requires an alcohol base. This isn't to alarm you, but to make you aware of reactions observed in you or your dog.

Citrus oils make up a large number of non-toxic flea control products today. The important criterion is to know that there are several kinds of products. Even so-called holistic approaches to flea prevention (Neem, Tea Tree, Hemp) can cause damage if not used appropriately. Carefully read the directions. As an educated consumer, you can find the right and safest product for your dog.

Read the labels on sprays. Ensure that the label says, "kills fleas", and not "prevents fleas". Some products offer dual ingredients for "killing fleas and ticks". Safer sprays can be used in between bathing for flea control like Vetri-Science's or Burt's Bees "bug offs." Stick with manufacturers who continually research and prove the efficacy of their products. My rule of thumb is that if it isn't safe for babies or me, then it is not safe for me pet. Ask your Veterinarians.

Daily brushing will not only help prevent fleas, but produce a gleaming coat and healthy skin. It gives you a chance to spend quality time with your pet and it desensitizes puppies to touch.

Brush your dog often and thoroughly right down to the skin. Otherwise, any flea shampoo you use will only be 50% effective. Remove all knots, mats and tangles before immersing your dog in water. If you don't, the water will tighten the mats. Compare it to getting a knot in your shoelace -- then wetting it -- same result. It is nearly impossible to get out with- out cutting. Rubbing a bit of olive or mineral oil into the mats helps to loosen them. It also takes out burrs, sap and gum. (See Hand-out on Grooming for Health and Self Esteem for more on bathing).

THE HOMEFRONT

If your dog has fleas, chances are your home has fleas. Wash or spray your dog's bedding. Sprinkle some citrus (or other natural) flea powder under the cushions of beds.

Put a teaspoon of herbal citrus flea powder in your vacuum cleaner bag. This will kill eggs, larvae, fleas and ants! Spray around each room concentrating on baseboards, cracks and crevices of flooring and furniture. Spray basements, crawl spaces and closets. Open windows and air the house.

Conquering fleas in the yard is an impossible goal. No one has invented ***invisible fencing for fleas***. Keeping your grass well cut and watered will help. Sandy areas tend to harvest fleas. Treating your yard can be dangerous for children and pets, unless you use safe products.

Unfortunately, everywhere you take your dog could be a potential breeding ground for fleas. Fleas can come in on your shoes! They can jump 8 feet. The combination of common sense, education, quality nutrition, topical treatments and preventive maintenance will be your most effective approach to flea control.

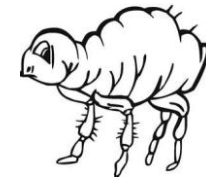


Dog Talk

Training and Wellness Sanctuary
For Dogs and their Humans

Awareness
Education
Relationship
Well-Being

FLEAS!



Freddie the Flea: Try and Kill Me!

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Pelham, NH 03076
603-635-DOGS (3647)

The **FLEA** is a feisty, aggravating, armored creature that can *hop up to one mile a day*.

LIFE CYCLE: KNOW THY ENEMY

Fleas begin their lives as a pearl-white oval egg about the size of an adult flea's head. The egg can take up to a week to hatch into the larva stage, resembling a tiny caterpillar. This is the nutritional phase. Its food source is tiny bits of processed blood deposited by the adult fleas.

Contrary to common belief, the black specks you see on your dog's belly are not eggs. They are flea feces/dirt, or dehydrated blood that has been sucked from your dog by the adult flea for its newly hatched larva. The egg can take up to a week to hatch into a larva. The larva stage lasts from 9 to 200 days. The larva then spins a cocoon in which it rests. This is the pupa stage. The pupa can lie dormant for as much as two years without food or a host animal. When the adult flea emerges from the cocoon, it is hungry and enjoys a good dog spa.

Adult fleas lay their eggs in floors, bedding, car-pets and dogs. With favorable weather conditions, fleas break out every 10 to 14 days. The first killing frost should take care of the flea problem outside. Those that remain on your dog will take up housekeeping quite comfortably inside your home.

FLEA DERMATITIS

Fleas are not only a nuisance, but can pose a threat to the health of your dog. Fleas can carry tapeworm larvae from one infected animal to another. Untreated tapeworm infestation sucks the reserves of a healthy animal leaving it prey to numerous diseases.

Allergy to the flea bite is another problem. When a flea takes its ration of blood, it leaves behind saliva containing itch-causing enzymes and other compounds that causes a hypersensitive reaction in some dogs. This reaction exhibits itself by red, sore, itchy skin, dull coat and mild to severe hair loss.

EXTERMINATION

To know the enemy is to conquer the enemy. To win the battle, you must forge ahead on several fronts. First, it must be recognized that the metabolism of each dog will have much to do with whether or not fleas find it attractive. It has been proven that fleas tend to be drawn to dogs that have nutritional, hormonal or systemic imbalances. They tend to prey on the elderly, unhealthy or un-groomed.

It has also been proven that insects have various sensor systems based on electromagnetic frequencies. These sensor systems are most strongly sensitized when the host animal is in a weakened state-of-being.

DOES MY DOG HAVE FLEAS?

Watch your pet. Are they scratching frequently? How does their coat and skin look? Flakey, dry? Roll your pet over and search through the hair slowly on the belly, inner thighs and on the base of the tail. Any specks that look like dried blood? Any unusual dry spots or sores? Unsure? Then schedule a "wellness check" with your Veterinarian.

NUTRITION

Prevention begins with quality nutrition. Choose a diet that suits the developmental stages and optimum health of your pet. Consult with your Veterinarian, Breeder or Nutritional Counselor. Premium foods are available in your local Farm & Garden Centers and Pet Supply Stores. Stay away from the myriad of grocery store brand foods that promise low priced nutrition, but do not back it up with quality ingredients. The label must "at least" read AAFCO at the least. Read the labels. *Colors are pretty, but not nutritious.*

If your dog scratches a lot, determine if this is actually due to fleas. Some skin problems are automatically labeled as flea allergies when the real culprit is an ingredient in the food. Feed high quality pet treats. Any changes you make must be consistent to see results.

Many dog food manufacturers are recognizing the benefits of adding nutritional brewers yeast and garlic to the food. They have micro-nutrients and micro-odors that will help to repel fleas. A small percentage of dogs have been known to have intolerance to yeast and garlic. If you plan to supplement your current dog food, consult with your Veterinarian or Nutritionist for the right amounts. Breeders have a wealth of experience to share and you can educate yourself online. Always ask, does it feel right or make sense for my dog (pets)? Adding supplements to the diet *willy-nilly* can counterbalance good nutrition. As with vitamin supplementation, there is a **synergistic approach** to adding these to your dog's diet. Get educated!

GROOMING

Quality grooming, good nutrition and preventative maintenance is the best approach! If the situation warrants it (serious flea infestation), you may need a flea dip or shampoo that is recommended by your Veterinarian or Groomer.

Flea products are strong enough to penetrate the hard, waxy shell of the flea. It is paramount that the products are safe enough *not* to intoxicate your dog or you!

FLEA SHAMPOO VS. DIP

Shampoos will be put on your dog, left for 5-15 minutes {read the labels}, then rinsed off. Dips are pre-mixed in the bottle or tub. They stay on your dog. It is the residual that continues to kill fleas and protect the dog for a certain period, depending on the strength of the dips. Be careful. Although most quality *shampoos* are safe and many contain conditioners for the skin and coat, not all dogs (or humans) can handle the strength of *dips*.

Because dips remain on your dog, consider that you or your children will be touching the dog.