Controlling Fleas at Home

By Geoffrey L. Handy and Guy R. Hodge, HSUS Director, Data and Information Services, in consultation with Dr. Melanie Adcock, HSUS Staff Veterinarian

For shelters and pet owners in virtually every part of the country, controlling fleas is a yearly struggle. The pesky insects not only torment dogs and cats and annoy pet owners, but also cause health problems for pets such as anemia, allergies, skin infections, and tapeworm infestations.

There is no single, tried-and-true method of flea control. In fact, many of the various approaches provoke arguments between those who swear they work and those who swear they don't. The essential thing to remember is that flea control will rarely be achieved simply by a shampoo here or a flea...
Getting rid of the bothersome pests takes hard work and persistence. By now, most shelters have established flea-control regimens that work for them. But when pet owners throw up their hands in frustration, humane societies and animal control departments should be prepared to provide them with the latest information on safe, effective tactics for the home.

The Life of the Flea

Controlling fleas is nearly impossible without understanding their life cycle. Adult fleas use their powerful piercing-sucking mouthparts to bite a dog or cat and dine on its blood for several days. After matting, the female lays anywhere from 3 to 18 eggs at a time (up to 400 in a year), usually off the host. If the eggs are laid on the host, they will soon fall off and lodge in bedding, carpets, upholstery, or cracks in the floor. A complete metamorphosis then occurs; each egg hatches and passes through three larval stages and a pupal (cocoon) stage before the adult flea emerges. When the adult insect feels the body warmth or vibrations, the solution is to treat the home as well as the animal, which means a thorough vacuuming and cleaning. It’s the single most effective way to eliminate fleas from the home. The dog or cat owner should start by washing all pet bedding in hot, soapy water. If the infestation is severe, it may be advisable to destroy the bedding. Next, all pet’s fur, the comb must be dipped in a dish of soapy water to drown the fleas. Special attention should be given to the base of the furniture and carpets rather than the pet. Pump sprays and aerosol foggers (or “bombs”) are the two most common forms of such pesticides. The spray is better since it can be directed under furniture and only in areas of the house where the pet sleeps or plays, though it may have to be used in concert with a bomb for severe infestations. The problem with most pesticides, including home sprays and foggers, is that they kill only adult fleas. Unhatched eggs and larvae that have escaped the reach of the vacuum cleaner will remain behind and later grow into adults. But one of the newest categories of chemicals added to the pest-control arsenal will prevent adult fleas from ever emerging. These are called insect growth regulators (IGRs, synthetic hormones that prevent developing pests from advancing past the larval stage. Studies have shown that the most common flea IGR, methoprene (manufactured under the trade name Precor, by the Zoecon Corporation), effectively controls fleas for months after just one home application and is extremely safe to both humans and animals. Because synthetic hormones like methoprene are unstable in light, they cannot be used outdoors. But treatment of the outside (and even the car) with other safe flea-control products should not be ignored.

Finally, The HSUS offers a word of caution about professional exterminators. They may be helpful for extreme infestations, but treatments can turn any home into a den of toxicity that may be unsafe for children and pets long after the application.

Treat the Pet

Obviously, treating the environment without simultaneously ridding the pet itself of the little varmints won’t get the pet owner very far. Despite all the pesticidal sprays, dips, and powders marketed to kill and repel fleas, The HSUS recommends that the pet owner start with periodic shampooing and daily grooming with a flea comb. This combination, in tandem with regular cleaning of the home, is both safe for the pet and highly effective.

The animal should first be bathed with a non-medicated pet shampoo, which should kill all the fleas on the animal at the time. A mild, medicated “flea” shampoo or a soap with insecticidal properties (such as Safer’s Insecticidal Soap) can be used; the shampoo will rinse off safely with water. Shampoos should be applied periodically according to directions until the problem is under control. The pet should also be groomed each day with a flea comb (available in most pet supply stores). After each stroke through the pet’s fur, the comb must be dipped in a dish of soapy water to drown the fleas. Special attention should be given to the base of the animal’s tail and the underside of the body between the hind legs. It’s also particularly important to use the comb when the animal comes in from outside.

Oils, Powders, Sprays, Dips, Collars...

This shampoo/flea comb regimen should succeed in keeping fleas off most pets. But cat owners will find that giving their feline a
Remember, Pesticides Are Poisons

The HSUS often receives calls from frantic pet owners whose pets have either died or are terribly sick after having been dipped, sprayed, or powdered with a pesticide. Before the advent of every flea season, humane organizations should use their newsletters and issue press releases and PSA’s to warn consumers that misuse of insecticides can sicken or kill their pets.

The two worst mistakes a pet owner can make are not reading the label before using an insecticide and not following the directions. The pet owner should be careful not to apply too much insecticide or use it too frequently. Pesticides should not be used on extremely young, old, sick, pregnant, or heartworm-infected animals and formulations for dogs should never be used on cats.

Finally, the pet owner should verify in advance that all chemicals used on a pet or in the home are compatible, especially if an exterminator is used. As a rule of thumb, pet owners should only use one pesticide at a time on their pet, and combine it with a non-toxic alternative such as a flea comb. To be safe, The HSUS strongly recommends that a pet owner seek the expert guidance of a veterinarian before applying any pesticide to an animal.

Symptoms of toxic reactions include diarrhea, vomiting, salivation, difficulty in breathing, incoordination, muscle tremors, convulsions, weakness, apprehension, depression, and other abnormal behaviors. At the first hint of a toxic reaction to a pesticide, the animal should be examined immediately by a veterinarian. Early diagnosis and treatment could save the animal’s life.

Remember, while insecticides may endanger the health of pets and their owners through misuse (see sidebar), they will not eliminate a flea infestation. Shortly after the animal is bathed, sprayed, or dipped, other fleas may hop onto its fur and the problem begins again. That’s why treating the environment to eliminate both developing and adult fleas is so important.

Insecticides Commonly Used in Flea Control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Chemical</th>
<th>Chemical Names Often Found on Product Labels (Active Ingredients)</th>
<th>Description and Toxic Potential</th>
<th>HSUS Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organophosphates</td>
<td>chlorfenphos, chlorpyrifos, cythioate, dalapon, dichlorvos, fenothion, malathion, naled, parathion, phosmet, rotenone, emephos, tetrachlorvinphos; often listed as “cholinesterase inhibitors”</td>
<td>kill fleas quickly; leave residue for further killing action; toxicity depends on particular product; according to one study, they are the most common cause of poisoning of dogs and cats in California.</td>
<td>not recommended in any form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbamates</td>
<td>bendiocarb, carbaryl, methycarbamates, propoxur; often listed as “cholinesterase inhibitors”</td>
<td>kill fleas quickly; leave residue for further killing action; toxicity depends on particular product; considered to be one of chemical groups that is most toxic to vertebrates; cythioate and fenothion are “systemics,” which kill fleas by rendering an animal’s blood toxic</td>
<td>not recommended in any form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chlorinated Hydrocarbons</td>
<td>Lindane, methoxychlor</td>
<td>use on dogs and cats curtailed in recent years; can be acutely toxic to most vertebrates, especially cats.</td>
<td>not recommended in any form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botanicals</td>
<td>d-limonene, pyrethrins, pyrethroids (synthetic botanicals such as allethrin, fenvalerate, d-phenothrin, resmethrin, and tetramethrin), pyrethromes</td>
<td>d-limonene is extracted from citrus fruit; pyrethrins are derived from plants such as chrysanthemums; pyrethromes kill extremely quickly and leave little residue; pyrethrins are the most common insecticide found in sprays; pyrethrins tend to be of low toxicity to mammals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insect Growth Regulators</td>
<td>methoprene, fenoxycarb</td>
<td>pyrethrins are recommended for use on the pet after non-chemical approaches have failed; d-limonene should not be used on cats</td>
<td>recommended for use in the home after vacuuming, if necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And the work continues as strong as ever for 1990. Resolutions to make April National U.S. have promoted “Be a P.A.L.” efforts to offer your community sound factual information about spaying and neutering pets. Animal shelters, and communities across the U.S. have promoted “Be a P.A.L.” efforts. And the work continues as strong as ever for 1990. Resolutions to make April National U.S. have promoted “Be a P.A.L.” efforts.

Since 1986, animal protection organizations, animal shelters, and communities across the U.S. have promoted “Be a P.A.L.” efforts. And the work continues as strong as ever for 1990. Resolutions to make April National U.S. have promoted “Be a P.A.L.” efforts.

The “Be a P.A.L.” kit contains a wide array of promotional materials to spread the spay/neuter message and promote April as “Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter” Month. And because you requested materials specifically related to cat overpopulation, we now feature a poster targeting this problem. In addition, our “Be a P.A.L.” T-shirt has been updated and now features the popular “P.A.L.” logo on an all-white, 100 percent cotton, “Beefy-T.” Information on how to order quantities of posters, T-shirts, fact sheets, litter bags, buttons, bumper stickers, and other materials at discounted prices is included in the kit.

To inform as many people as possible, we also offer “Be a P.A.L.” television PSAs produced by Gail Christensen of the Coalition for Pet Population Control in L.A. The PSAs feature TV and movie personalities, including the stars of TV’s The Golden Girls. These PSAs are available in 3/4-inch, broadcast-quality tapes for $20. If you haven’t already received information on obtaining and using the PSAs and all the other “P.A.L.” materials, you should very soon.

Help carry the message. Be a P.A.L.—Prevent A Litter!
Cat Columnist Captures Hearts

By Rhonda Lucas Donald

If you have a pet question in West Virginia, just ask Pandora, the knowledgeable Humane Society cat with her own newspaper column in The Jackson Herald. Pandora has been "writing" the column for the Jackson County Humane Society (JCHS), P.O. Box 44, Cottageville, WV 25239) for about a year and a half now. Each week, the tabby (who is helped a great deal by a Society board member) gives pet tips, educates the community about animal issues, and generally lets readers know what’s going on at the shelter—Pandora’s House—from a cat’s-eye view. Her weekly column has been quite a hit, making her a celebrity and giving the shelter some positive publicity.

If there is an issue that needs to be addressed, Pandora does it in the context of how it affects her and the animals at the shelter. For example, when a pound seizure bill was introduced in West Virginia, here’s what Pandora had to say: “I’m sorry if I sound a little distracted lately, but I’m afraid this Pound Seizure thing has got me very worried. West Virginia University has introduced a bill to make Pound Seizure mandatory. All this is rather confusing to me, being just a cat, but I heard Pat and Jeanne Pandora and her column in the local paper have done wonders to publicize the shelter.

Pet Identification Goes High Tech

By Rhonda Lucas Donald

A lucky terrier mix is going home with a new family today. He’s been adopted from Marin Humane Society (171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd., Novato, CA 94947) and he’s about ready to go. But there’s one more thing to be done before he greets his new owners. A technician carefully holds the little dog while another inserts the needle of a handheld implanter into the skin between the dog’s shoulders and depresses a button. The dog reacts as any animal would to a normal injection. Next, the other technician picks up a device that resembles a hair dryer and holds it over the dog’s shoulders until a beep emits. A ten-digit code lights up on an electronic box attached to the device. The beep and code emanate from a microchip that was just implanted under the animal’s skin. The code
Bonnie Story uses the special implanter to implant a microchip in a cat that's been adopted from the Marin Humane Society.

ensures the technician to locate the animal’s owner. The little dog is successfully, permanently identified, thanks to microchip technology.

Microchip implantation is the new wave in animal identification. Veterinarians have been implanting the tiny chips for some time. But only recently have shelters gotten involved with implanting and scanning for their shelters. Diane Allevato, Marin’s executive director, is very pleased with the program, which has identified 11 stray animals since they began implanting last May. One reason for her enthusiasm is the permanent nature of the microchip. “Tattoos are impossible,” she says. “They fade, they discolor, and there are too many registries. The microchip requires no anesthetizing, is not deforming, and can’t be removed like tags.”

Allevato was so impressed with the microchip concept that she and her agency decided to underwrite the cost of implantation for all animals adopted from Marin. “If we can protect all of our animals,” she says, “that’s a large segment of the animal population. Plus, it provides us with information. It gives us an idea of what happens to our animals after they’re adopted.”

The cost of implanting the microchips can be a considerable expense and is one of the main reasons skeptics of the technology feel that it will not catch on. Infopet currently suggests a retail price of $40 for the chip, veterinary services, and one year’s registration on their computer database. A subsequent yearly fee of $11 is required by Infopet and goes toward maintaining the database. Infopet does provide chips to shelters for $15 a piece. The yearly fee is passed on to the adopter. Infopet agrees to maintain all registrants for the life of the pet.

Phil Arkow, executive director of the Humane Society of the Pike’s Peak Region (P.O. Box 187, Colorado Springs, CO 80901), is a supporter of microchip identification, but adds, “I don’t think it’s going to catch on until the cost comes down.” He also points out that municipalities and counties may oppose the idea for fear of losing revenue from licensing fees.

As with so many other issues, the responsible pet owners will be willing to spend the money to protect their animals. But for the majority, the cost to implant the chip and maintain the yearly fee will keep microchip IDs, no matter how reliable, out of the mainstream.

Additionally, because many pets do not remain with their original owners but are given away, maintaining an up-to-date database is problematic. The people maintaining the microchip database have no way to keep up with subsequent owners, and these owners may have no knowledge of the microchip or willingness to pay the maintenance fees.

The other obvious drawback to the chips is that a person who finds a stray has no way of detecting the chip and therefore may be hesitant to help the animal since he or she can’t ascertain whether it is lost. If the shelter or the vet where the stray ends up has no scanner, the ID is useless, and right now, agencies with scanners are concentrated in Southern California.

Microchips may be the ID of the future, but for now the technology is still ahead of its time. Although a reliable, safe, and permanent means of identifying pets, microchip implantation may not be the most practical method. Like any new concept, it will take time to catch on. If price becomes less of a factor, more pets are implanted, and every shelter scans for the chips, this piece of new technology could significantly cut down on the number of lost animals that are never returned to their owners.
Bruflats Violate Probation

In 1988, Shelter Sense reported on the tragic case of 88 cats rescued from James and Bobbie Bruflat's Full Bowl cat shelter in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The surviving cats were found amid garbage, feces, and the bodies of dead cats, some apparently cannibalized. The Bruflats were convicted on charges of failing to provide shelter to animals and were sentenced to three years probation, during which time they could not own, manage, operate, or work in any animal shelter. They were allowed to keep only two of the original cats.

But the Bruflats were not content to abide by the stipulations of their probation. According to Bill Loefler, operations manager for the Wisconsin Humane Society (WHS, 4151 N. Humboldt Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212), officials found a leaflet the Bruflats had planned to start. When the couple appeared for a probation meeting, they were arrested for violating probation, the Bruflats were released, their probation remaining in force with about a year and a half remaining. Of the 19 cats taken from the residence, only eight were placed for adoption. The rest had to be euthanized due to illness.

Cooperation Stops Bear Wrestling

When Marie Taylor, director of the Leflore County Humane Society (P.O. Box 620, Greenwood, MS 38930), learned of a bear wrestling event scheduled in town, she went to work to put a stop to it.

After consulting with Debby Boswell of the Mississippi Animal Rescue League in Jackson, Mississippi, Taylor felt she could have the event stopped under a state law that prohibits animal fighting. The Leflore County Prosecutor agreed and pointed out that any person present during the event could be arrested and charged with a misdemeanor. The prosecutor contacted the local sheriff, who then sent a deputy to talk to the owner of the nightclub where the event was to be held. After the deputy explained that bear wrestling was illegal and that he was prepared to arrest all patrons of the club present during the show, the club owner canceled it. Additionally, the owner of the bear was asked to leave town because a newly-passed city ordinance prohibits keeping wild animals within the city limits.

But the work was not over yet. The following day, Boswell received a call from a citizen in nearby Bolivar County who objected to the same act being in her area. Boswell told her about the state law and referred her to her local sheriff. After consulting with the sheriff in Leflore County, Bolivar's sheriff was able to prevent the wrestling event there, too.

The cooperation among humane groups, concerned individuals, and local judicial and legal authorities makes this story such a success. Taylor explains the great support she received from the sheriff's department: "They have to handle all the animal problems here because we don't have animal control. We've always been very cooperative with them, and they return the favor whenever they can."

The willingness of the humane groups to network was also crucial in this situation. If enough groups work together like this, perhaps bear wrestling and other abusive animal shows will be turned out of enough towns to make the "acts" unprofitable.

ACA Scholarships Still Available

ACA Scholarships Still Available

ACO Training Guide Available

For more information about the scholarships and for an application, write The Humane Society of the U.S., 5430 Grosvenor Lane, Suite 100, Bethesda, MD 20814, Attn: Barbara Cassidy.
It's Flea Season Again. Are You Ready for Battle?

Every year you watch helplessly as fleas torment your pet and drive you to distraction. Besides being downright annoying, the pesky insects can do plenty of harm to your pet, too; they can cause allergies, skin infections, anemia, even tapeworm infections.

Feel like giving up? Feel like dousing your pet with every pesticidal shampoo, dip, spray, powder, or collar on the shelf? Don't do either. Instead, try this safe, effective flea-control regimen:

**Clean Your Quarters.** Begin with a thorough cleaning, which will eliminate most of the eggs and adult fleas lurking in your home. Wash all pet bedding in hot, soapy water. Mop hard floors. Vacuum everywhere—carpets, upholstery, drapes, corners, crevices. Seal the vacuum cleaner bag immediately in a plastic bag. Once you start, don’t let up or you’ll lose ground! Vacuum and clean once a week until you begin to see results. Then you can do it less frequently.

**Liberate Your Pet.** On the same day you first vacuum and clean, shampoo your pet with a non-medicated shampoo to rid the pet of fleas. After that, use a flea comb (available in most pet supply stores) on a daily basis. Dip it in a dish of soapy water after each stroke to drown the fleas.

**Commission New Weaponry.** If you have a heavy infestation, apply an environmental insecticide after vacuuming. You can use a “butor bomb,” but a spray pump is better for all but extreme infestations since it will allow you to apply insecticide only where your pet sleeps and plays. Don’t apply it to your pet! Products that kill developing fleas (called insect growth regulators) are the safest and most effective—look for the word “methoprene” on the label. Follow directions to see how often you can apply it.

**Need Those Warnings?** If they are misused, pesticides can sicken or kill your pet. If you feel you must use a pesticidal product, whether it’s a shampoo, dip, spray, powder, or collar, ALWAYS read the label and follow directions. NEVER use pesticides (including flea collars) on kittens and puppies, or old, sick, pregnant, or heartworm-infected animals. And as a rule of thumb, use only one pesticide at a time on your pet.

---

**Directory of Breed Groups Available to the National Animal Control Association**

- **S**helters can increase their adoptions with the help of a national directory of breed-specific rescue groups. The directory is the major component of Project BREED (Breed Rescue Efforts and Education), a program begun by Marylander Shirley Weber to increase awareness and assist in the creation of breed-specific rescue groups nationwide.

- The premise of Project BREED is based on the fact that some 25 percent of the dogs that go through shelters are purebreds, while adoption statistics average 10 percent for all breeds and mixes. By networking with breed-specific rescue groups, shelters can improve adoption statistics and increase availability of purebreds and crossbreeds, as well as provide other services such as lost animals.

- Weber is offering shelters an introductory price of $1.95 per directory plus $1.50 postage and handling. Discounts are available for quantity orders; shelters may want to sell them as a fund-raiser to vets, groomers, trainers, kennels, and others. To order a copy and find out more about Project BREED, write Shirley Weber, President, Network for Ani-Males & Females, 18707 Curry Powder Ln., Germantown, MD 20874, or call her at (301) 428-3675 on weekdays or between 8:30 and 10:00 pm EST weekends.

---

**FIVE MINUTES**

**Is it all it takes to write a letter that can save animals’ lives?** The newly redesigned Animal Activist Alert newsletter supplies all the information you need to protest the treatment of animals nationwide.

**TAKE FIVE MINUTES.**

Write to The Humane Society of the United States, Dept. SS, 2100 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20037, to request information about how you can get your free subscription to the Animal Activist Alert.
Help Make FP-3 Available

By Phyllis Wright, HSUS Vice President, Companion Animals

We need your immediate help in getting the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to approve the solution FP-3 for euthanasia of dogs and cats. As you may already know, FP-3 is a sodium pentobarbital solution with the addition of Lidocaine, produced by Vortech Pharmaceuticals. FP-3 is a Schedule III drug. This means that to obtain it, a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) license is required but not a DEA order form. Pure sodium pentobarbital, which is a Schedule II drug, requires a license as well as DEA order forms, making it more difficult to acquire. FP-3 is the only Schedule III drug that can be used on dogs, cats, and all other warm-blooded animals. The fact that it is easier to obtain than pure pentobarbital and provides the same superior, humane euthanasia makes its availability of utmost importance.

It is required that Vortech Pharmaceuticals submit a New Animal Drug Application to the FDA for approval of FP-3. Because FP-3 is so desperately needed and there is no other Schedule III drug available for both dogs and cats, I am asking you to write to the FDA and request that they accelerate the drug approval process by putting FP-3 on the “fast track.” Please write a short letter to: Dr. Marsha K. Larkins, Chief for Companion and Wildlife Drugs Branch, FDA, Rm. 6B-24, Center of Veterinary Medicine, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857. Bring to her attention that FP-3 is one of the most humane methods of euthanasia available and that it is needed by shelters across the country for euthanizing millions of animals. Explain that since T-61 and Repose are no longer on the market, the only Schedule III drug available is Beuthanasia-D, which is not approved for cats. In addition, the company that produces Beuthanasia-D will not sell it to anyone other than licensed veterinarians. If you have used and been satisfied with FP-3 in the past, please mention this in your letter.

I will also be talking to the FDA, but your written word will help us in the uphill fight to get fast approval. Every letter counts, so please get your comments in the mail.

Shelter Sense
The Humane Society of the United States
5430 Grosvenor Lane, Suite 100
Bethesda, MD 20814

Address Correction Requested