



If you've been infested

First: Don't panic. Follow these tips and talk to your veterinarian about how to handle a dreaded flea infestation.

If you started using flea medications after you discovered a flea infestation, you'll need to treat your house too. Why? Fleas can live for several months in your house and yard, and flea eggs can survive in your carpet, cushions, and drapes for years.

And your pet isn't the only one at risk: People can get irritating flea bites too. Ridding your home of these pests takes time and a concerted approach.

Here's what to do:

To get rid of housebound fleas, use professional flea foggers in each room and sprays for hard-to-reach spots. Clean the flea eggs out of your house by vacuuming several times a week, taping the vacuum bags shut, and throwing them away each time. Also clean your dog's favorite hangout spots and wash her bedding regularly.

If your dog spends time outdoors in a kennel, be sure to wash the bedding or discard old hay if you use it. Spray doghouses and kennels with an indoor flea spray, and let all treated areas dry before you let your pet outside.

If your flea problem is recurring, you may need to treat your yard as well. Use professional, concentrated yard sprays for the outdoor fight. You can buy many that attach easily to the end of a garden hose for application.

It's especially important to spray moist and shaded areas of your yard. But be sure not to use any environmental treatments directly on your pet.

Ridding your pet and her environment of these hardy pests is a tough job, but you'll rest easier knowing that your dog doesn't have to endure the maddening itching and scratching or the insidious diseases these parasites can inflict.