

# FLEAS! FLEAS! FLEAS!

## BY LAURIE, TECHNICIAN

It's flea season again. Well, not really. It's always flea season in the Northwest and especially bad late summer to early fall. Our winters are mild enough that the fleas don't die. They just slow down. If we have a nice warm day in January, fleas will be hopping on anything that lives and breathes. Your house is also the perfect year round habitat for fleas. It has the ambient temperature and humidity for fleas to thrive. Because of these facts, we recommend year round flea treatment.

The majority of fleas live in the environment even though adult fleas hop on an animal and live their entire lives there repeatedly feeding on blood from their host. After each blood meal, a female flea will lay what eventually will become hundreds of eggs that fall off the host into the environment. Two weeks later, these eggs hatch and then pupate into adult fleas. The adult fleas hop on your pet and the cycle starts all over again.

Fleas are sometimes very difficult to find. Just because you don't see any doesn't mean fleas aren't present. As a matter of fact, you may think your pet is flea free when in truth the fleas may just be very good at hiding. Also, cats are very good at eating fleas as they clean themselves. Dogs will also consume a few as they feel them biting. Just because you or your family are not getting bitten doesn't mean you are flea free. Fleas prefer our dogs and cats so as long as they can support the number of fleas in the environment; you'll probably not get bitten.

We often forget the havoc that fleas can exhort. Flea ingestion is the most common cause of tapeworms in pets. Hemobartella is a type of anemia caused by fleas that can affect dogs and cats. Let's not forget all the itchy pets with skin infections courtesy of our old friends Mr. and Mrs. Flea.

Today we have several good products available to control fleas. Please feel free to call or stop in and ask us which product would be best for you and your pets.

A warning about over the counter flea products. Some of the least expensive products labeled for dogs contain pyrethrins or permethrins. These chemicals used to be all we had available to us to fight fleas, but they can be toxic to some dogs and should never be used on cats. Every spring, countless cats and kittens are sickened and some die of pyrethrin or permethrin toxicity. Please don't be tempted to purchase any of these products no matter how inexpensive they are.