

- Persons who are allergic to flea bites can develop skin lesions, itching or other symptoms.
- Family members may vary greatly in the reaction they suffer and some may be convinced they are not being bitten, which may or may not be true.

**When using any pesticide:
read, understand and take heed
of all directions on the label.**

Other leaflets and fact sheets available

- Facts on Rats
- Bed Bugs & their Control
- Feral Pigeons
- Protecting your Home from Termites
- Approved Pesticide for Termite Treatment
- Using Pesticides Safely
- Safe Use of Household Chemicals



Further information

For further information contact an Environmental Health Officer at your Local Government offices.

or

The Department of Health's Environmental Hazards Unit
on (08) 9383 4244

<http://www.health.wa.gov.au/envirohealth/hazards/pests.cfm>

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Fleas



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Fleas

Fleas are readily controlled provided you take a few simple steps. The majority of fleas found in our homes are of the 'Cat Flea' variety. This type of flea prefers the cat or dog as its host; however, it may also use humans. The name 'Sand Flea' is commonly used. This is not a different variety of flea but a term describing a location where fleas are often found.

Fleas usually only bite humans when there is a severe plague or when the normal host animal has left the premises. For example, it is quite common to experience a flea plague after a pet's death or when moving into vacant premise that has previously housed a dog or cat. The pupal stage of development can stay in the carpets or undisturbed edges of floors etc. for up to one year. These pupae will develop into adult fleas as soon as the house is occupied again.

How to handle a flea plague

If you have a pet, contact your vet for advice on the many different flea products available. Treat your pet and its bedding for the fleas at the same time as treating your house, otherwise all your efforts will be wasted.

All stages of flea development may occur in your carpet. Having your carpet steam cleaned will kill many of the adult and pre-adult fleas; however, some eggs may survive and hatch afterwards. (Prior to steam cleaning ensure you check with the company that your carpet is suitable for steam cleaning.)

Whether or not you have your carpet steam cleaned, you should vacuum carpets, floors and upholstered furniture every day for at least a week. Pay particular attention to areas that are not disturbed often, for example behind doors, furniture, cupboards etc. The contents of the vacuum cleaner dust bag should be treated with an insecticide or placed in the freezer for 24 hours before disposal.

If you still have fleas you may need to use a pesticide to combat the problem. Be aware that fleas are very persistent and you may require more than one pesticide treatment for a severe infestation.

Select the lowest toxicity pesticide product that will do the job.

Chemical control of fleas

There are many pesticides registered for flea control. However, it is advisable to ask your pest control operator or pesticide retailer to use one of the lower toxicity pesticides available in conjunction with growth regulators methoprene, triflumuron or fenoxycarb. Lower toxicity pesticides include the pyrethroids such as deltamethrin, permethrin and tetramethrin.

Inside the House

If you wish to treat your house yourself it is best to restrict yourself to the lower toxicity pyrethroids.

- Space sprays e.g. 'flea bombs'
- For greater effectiveness, use one which contains a pyrethroid and methoprene (or other insect growth regulator). The growth regulator stops the eggs developing into reproductive adults.

- Surface sprays.
- Use a pyrethroid with a growth regulator suitable for fleas.

Outside

- Use a pyrethroid/insect growth regulator combination product.
- Ensure that you wash pet's bedding weekly in hot water and treat with a pet wash product including a pesticide that will kill fleas.
- Regularly treat areas with a suitable pesticide where pets sleep. This may need to be done weekly until the flea plague is under control.
- Use 2 sprays initially, 10-14 days apart. The first kills adult fleas and the second kills fleas which develop from immature stages which survived the first application.

Safety measures when using a pesticide

- Remove food or place in air tight containers. Remove or cover crockery, kitchen utensils etc. then wash prior to use.
- Do not allow anyone else in the area whilst using pesticides. Remove pets.
- Ensure that your house is thoroughly aired prior to re-occupation.

Health effects

- Fleas are not generally associated with disease transmission in Australia.
- There are four different classes of skin reactions to flea bites, ranging from immediate (minutes) to delayed (hours to days).