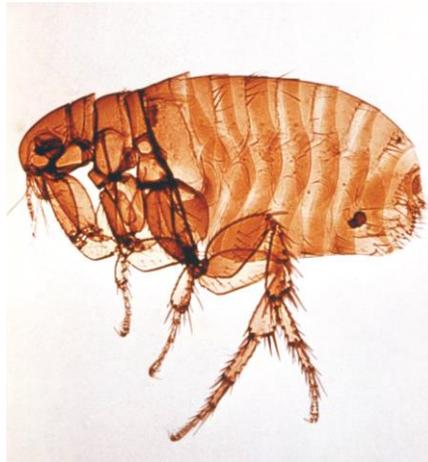


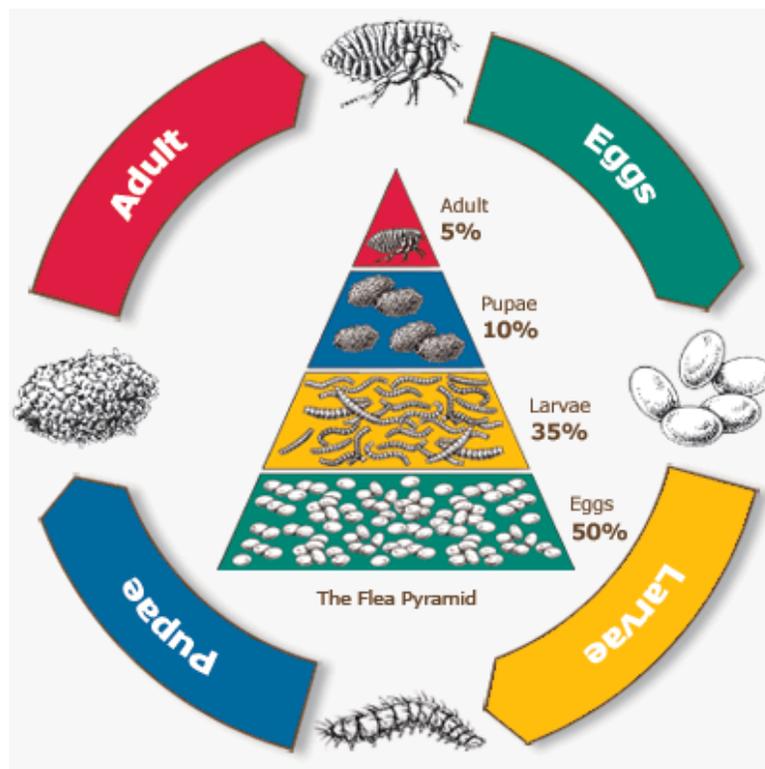
## The Short Story on Fleas

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Flea infestation is a common scourge that is much easier to treat now with new-generation products than in the past. Fleas affect both cats and dogs equally, and are often found in yards or carried by wildlife. They not only cause severe itching and skin breakouts, but can actually cause anemia in young animals with heavy infestations, and they spread tapeworms.



Adult fleas (pictured above) are actually only 5 – 10% of the problem during an infestation. The majority of the fleas are represented by eggs, larvae, and pupae in the environment as shown by the “flea pyramid” below.



The cycle begins when the female flea eats a blood meal from your pet. She then will lay up to 40 eggs a day in your pet's fur. The eggs fall off your dog or into the environment and are dormant until the right conditions (warm and humid) exist, and then hatch into larvae. The larvae live for 1 – 3 weeks in the environment, eating pet dander and "flea dirt" (digested blood – feces – from the adult fleas). Flea dirt is commonly found at the pet's tailhead, and is a sign that the pet needs to be treated for fleas, even if you don't see adults moving around. The larvae will spin a cocoon and become pupae, which protects the developing flea and can also become dormant in the environment for months or even years. The pupae's cocoon has a sticky coating, making it difficult to remove from carpeting and protecting it from chemicals. The pupae hatch from their cocoons when the presence of a potential host is made obvious by vibrations, rising levels of carbon dioxide, and body heat. Adult fleas emerge from the cocoon and begin feeding within a few hours, starting the life cycle all over again.



Flea dirt at the tailhead.

Before the invention of the new-generation spot-on or oral flea products, getting rid of fleas used to be a major battle. While you still need to thoroughly vacuum the environment and throw the bag away immediately after vacuuming, the days of flea dips, baths, bombs, carpet sprays, and other major chemical warfare are over, thankfully. Treating all pets in the household with Frontline Plus, Advantage, K9 Advantix, Revolution, Certifect, Promeris, Comfortis, Trifexis, Vectra 3D, etc. (I'm sure I missed a few) will generally take care of the infestation and prevent recurrence as long as you continue to treat the pet monthly, or however often is indicated on the label. Be sure to read the label and make sure the product that you are using is safe for cats if you are planning to use it on them. Cats are extremely sensitive to certain chemicals, so it is also important to keep your cat from grooming a spot-on product off your dog while it is still drying, generally for 24 hours after application.



Properly applying a flea treatment to the dog over the loose skin of the neck. Part the hair to ensure that the product is squirted directly onto the dog's skin.