

## **STILL SEEING FLEAS?**

### **Q. Why am I still seeing live fleas after treatment?**

A. If you still see fleas on your cat or dog after treating them, it would be natural to think that the flea treatment isn't working. Like many things in life, it's not as simple as that! Modern flea treatments, such as FRONTLINE, don't work by stopping fleas from jumping on your pet- they are effective at killing newly arriving fleas within 24 hours.

The flea life cycle is such that the fleas that are seen on your pet are only a small proportion of the total flea population. 95% of the problem exists in the pet's environment as flea eggs, larvae and pupae (cocoons). New fleas can jump on your pet at any time from an infested environment. That is why it is normal to see some fleas on a treated pet. Each new flea takes up to 24 hours to kill. Because it's very hard to tell fleas apart, it's easy to see why some people think that the product isn't working when actually it is continuing to kill fleas – you are simply seeing different fleas each time that will be killed soon. It can take up to 3 months to fully resolve a flea infestation (or even longer in some cases) - see "What is the best way to resolve a home infestation?" for advice on eradicating a flea problem as quickly as possible.

### **Q. Why am I still seeing flea droppings in my pet's coat after treatment?**

A. If you still see fleas or flea droppings on your cat or dog after treating them, it would be natural to think that the flea treatment isn't working. Like many things in life, it's not as simple as that! Modern flea treatments, such as FRONTLINE, don't work by stopping fleas from jumping on your pet- they are effective at killing newly arriving fleas within 24 hours.

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New fleas that jump onto a pet will have consumed a blood meal and defecated within 5-10 minutes of landing on your pet. Fipronil, the active ingredient in FRONTLINE, will also make the flea become hyperactive before death. Therefore, you should still expect to see flea droppings and lively (dying) fleas whilst treatment is being used after your pet has been exposed to a flea infested area, more so during the warmer months when there is generally a higher flea burden outdoors.

### **Q. Why am I seeing even more fleas on my pet after applying FRONTLINE?**

A. The active ingredient in FRONTLINE (fipronil) kills fleas by affecting their nervous system, making them hyperactive before dying. These dying fleas often rise to the top of your pet's haircoat, so the presence of visible fleas after treating your pet, is a sign that the product is working.

It is also important to remember that the majority of the flea population is in the environment. If you are still seeing a large number of fleas a few days after starting treatment it is possible that there is an infestation somewhere in the home. It can take up to 3 months to fully resolve a flea infestation (or even longer in some cases) - see "What is the best way to resolve a home infestation?" for advice on eradicating a flea problem as quickly as possible.

### **Q. What is the best way to resolve a home infestation?**

A. If there is a pre-existing home infestation or there has been a gap in treatment, follow these steps.

- Treat all pets with a suitable product every 4 weeks for at least 3 months (sometimes it can take a bit longer to fully resolve the problem).
- Use a home spray that contains an adulticide and an insect growth regulator. These ingredients won't kill the flea pupae already present in the home, but they do reduce the number of eggs and larvae that go on to develop into pupae and therefore decrease the time it takes for the infestation to be resolved.
- Vacuum more frequently than usual and focus on areas under furniture, nooks and crannies etc. As well as getting rid of the flea eggs and larvae, this will help stimulate the pupae to hatch faster. Remember to shake rugs, cushions and so on, too.
- By allowing treated pets to access all parts of the home you usually let them into, your pet acts as a 'living vacuum cleaner' to kill the newly hatched fleas before they can lay more eggs. Because of this, it is normal to see fleas on treated pets during this time. These newly hatched fleas will die within 24 hours, before they are able to lay eggs which would infest your home.
- Wash all pet bedding at 60°C to help kill eggs or larvae that may be present.

**Q. Why is my pet still scratching?**

A. A flea that is dying following exposure to FRONTLINE will become hyperactive and may irritate your pet as it is running around their coat just before it is killed. However, scratching could be a sign of many different types of skin problem and if you are concerned about your pet's skin, we suggest that you contact your veterinary practice for further advice.

**Q. Can fleas build up an immunity to the treatment?**

A. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that fleas have developed immunity to the active ingredients in any of the common flea control products, including fipronil (FRONTLINE). Recent difficulties in controlling flea infestations have been attributed to an explosion in the flea population due to changing weather conditions. Effective flea treatment not only involves continuous year-round treatment, but also environmental control and regular vacuuming and washing of pet bedding- see "What is the best way to resolve a home infestation?" for more advice.

**Q. I'm only seeing fleas on one pet, do I need to treat the others?**

A. Yes. Some pets groom more than others so it is possible to see many fleas on one pet and not notice any at all on the others, despite them being exposed to equal numbers outdoors. If you only treat one pet, any others will be bringing in fleas that then go on to lay eggs and infest the home. This is especially common in cats due to their inquisitive nature. They can explore heavily infested areas before coming home and grooming most of the fleas off before you notice them.

**Q. I never used to see fleas on my pets when using FRONTLINE and now I am seeing some. Is this because the product has become less effective?**

A. No, it is normal for parasite populations outdoors to fluctuate. This is because flea numbers in the outdoor environment depend on temperature, humidity, number of hosts (such as wildlife and cats) and vegetation cover. If any of these change from one year to the next, you can see an explosion in parasite numbers so that they suddenly become noticeable on your pets (or, alternatively, decrease in number).