

Do I need to treat my pet for fleas in the winter?

Yes, in fact you should! With recent weather being unseasonably warm, it's no surprise that fleas are still a threat to our furry friends. However, you might not know that fleas actually love to live inside houses as well, be it on carpet or hardwood floors. This means that your pet may be at risk year round. Fleas, being blood-sucking parasites on the skin, can cause itchiness, skin infections, and anemia. They also are involved in transmitting blood parasites and tapeworms. You may see licking, chewing, scratching, and/or sleepiness in affected pets; however, there are many that may show no signs at all. Using a small, fine toothed comb you can often find the fleas or the "flea dirt" (black specks that turn red when wet) on the animal when they are infested. The good news is that fleas are treatable and preventable! There are many good flea products available from your veterinarian, including oral and topical treatments. If your pet has fleas, the first rule is to treat all pets in the household with high quality flea preventatives to eliminate an animal home for the fleas. After all, they don't like to live on us, just our pets! Next, remember that the majority of the flea population actually lives in the environment, often taking up residence in dark places such as under your furniture. Thorough cleaning and using environmental treatments (i.e. exterminator services) can help to kill these stages of the flea life cycle as well. It can take months to clear fleas from your home and animals, so prevention is key! There is no time like the present to start your pet on flea prevention, so please contact your veterinarian for more information.

Submitted by: Dr. Stephanie Edwards