

Fleas

By Carol S. Foil, DVM, MS, Diplomate A.C.V.D.

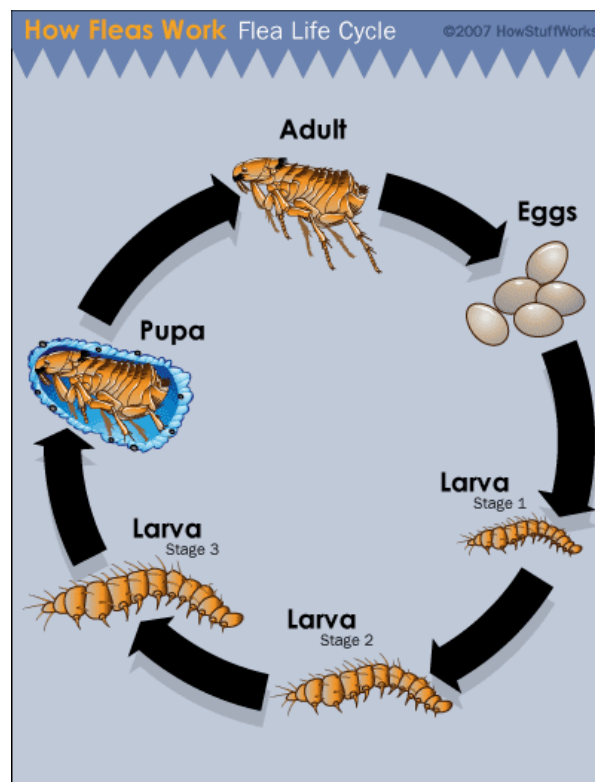
Board-certified specialist through the American College of Veterinary Dermatology

Fleas are the most common external parasite of companion animals. Flea allergy dermatitis is the most common skin disease of dogs and cats! Flea control has always been a challenge for veterinarians and pet owners because the adult fleas cause the clinical signs, yet the majority of the flea population (eggs, larvae and pupae) are to be found off the pet in and around the home.

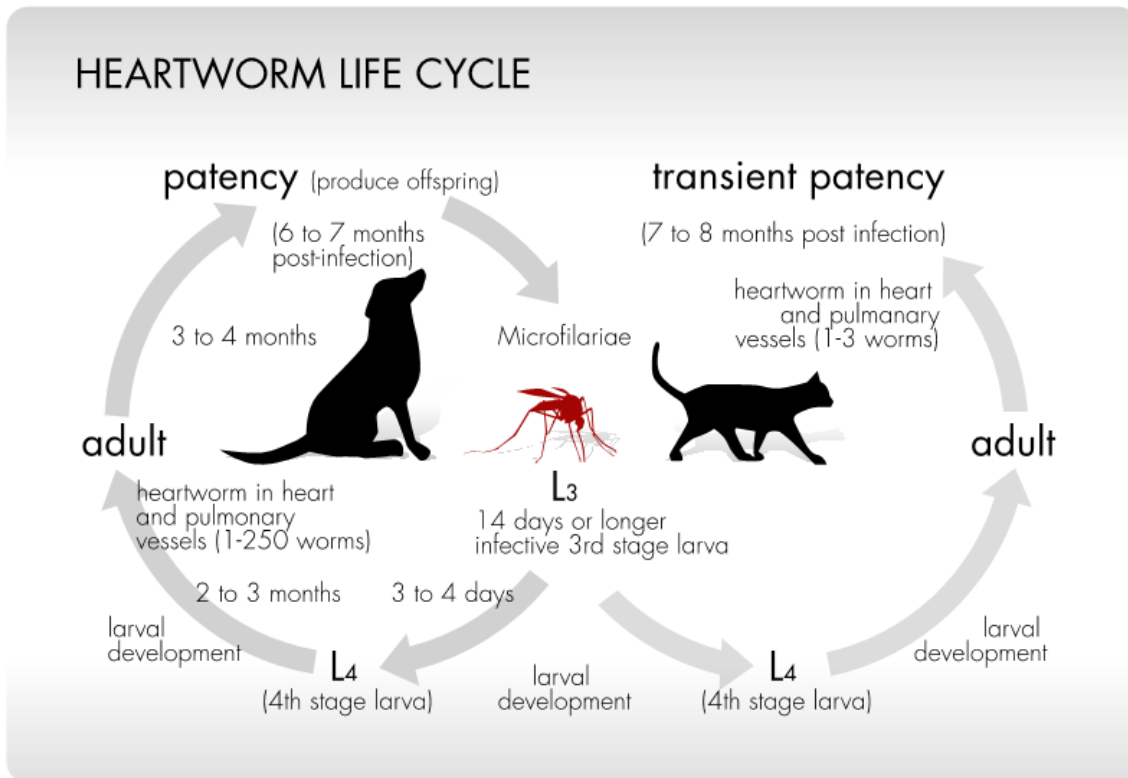
Fleas are present year-round in Florida, so it is important to keep your pet on flea prevention year-round, even if you are not actively seeing fleas. If you are experiencing an active flea infestation, it is important to treat not only your pet, but also your house and yard (to help eliminate the other life stages of the flea).

The Life Cycle of the Flea

Eggs are laid in the hair coat and are designed to fall off the host. Larvae develop in the host's environment and feed on adult flea feces (blood) that fall out of the hair coat of the pet. Larvae eventually spin cocoons (often within carpet fibers) for pupation. Pupae can lie dormant for many months; they are stimulated to expupate as emergent adults by vibration, warming and increased carbon dioxide. Normally, expupation occurs when a host is near and the new flea finds the pet within seconds of emergence. New fleas begin feeding within hours of finding a dog or cat. The entire life cycle of *C. felis* can be completed in as few as 16 days!



Heartworm Disease



Heartwormsociety.org

Heartworm disease is spread through exposure to mosquitos. Since mosquitos are prevalent year-round in Florida, it is important to keep your dog or cat on heartworm prevention year-round. Even a dog that goes outside only to use the bathroom is still exposed to mosquitos and needs to be on prevention. Remember, heartworm prevention is just that, prevention. It is still important to have a heartworm test performed every year to ensure we did not develop an infection that needs additional treatment.

Heartworm preventive medications are used to periodically kill larval heartworms that have managed to gain access to the dog's body. At this point, the products available are intended for monthly use. This means each time they are given they kill all the heartworm larvae (stage L3 and L4) that have accumulated in the past month. There are many topical and oral choices.

Also note: because the heartworm tests on the market either ok for microfilariae or for adult worm proteins, they will not detect infection with immature worms. This is why it takes 5 to 7 months from the time of exposure to get a valid heartworm test and also why there is no point in testing puppies less than 5 to 7 months of age.