

From your veterinarian

5 facts about flea allergy dermatitis

Your pet can't stop itching, but why? Here's a look at flea allergy dermatitis (FAD), a condition your pet could be suffering from, even if you've taken all the standard precautions against fleas. Read through the information, then consult with your veterinarian to find the best treatment option for your pet.

1. FAD is common.

According to the Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC), flea allergy dermatitis accounts for about 50 percent of all canine and feline dermatological cases reported to veterinarians. Watch for scratching around the tail base, rear, and groin in dogs, and scratching or crusty bumps around your cat's neck. Cats with FAD also tend to lick constantly, often to the point of exposing bare skin.

2. FAD can affect your pet even if you've administered a topical or oral parasite preventive.

Most of the more popular parasite preventives work great for the average pet, particularly when used year-round. But they're not magic. When a flea jumps on your pet, the preventive doesn't kill it instantly—there's always a bit of a delay. If your pet suffers from FAD, a few bites over time can result in hours of scratching or licking.

3. Fleas aren't always present with FAD.

You can search and search and come up empty. Your veterinarian may not even be able to spot a flea on



your pet. Fleas are fast, and some pets have thick coats. The fleas don't want to be spotted, so even a thorough search can overlook them. And all it takes is a quick walk near a nest of fleas to expose your pet to a whole new batch.

4. Your other pets won't necessarily itch.

Not all pets are affected with FAD. So even if you've administered parasite preventives to all of your pets and they all spend the same amount of time outdoors, one might spend all day scratching his itchy coat while the other remains unaffected.

5. Even indoor cats can suffer from FAD.

Fleas don't just nest outdoors. Your other pets could carry them into the house, or they could sneak in with your human guests. As long as they have a warm place to thrive, they pose a threat to your pets.

Common treatment options for FAD include a 10- to 14-day dose of a mild steroid, along with a vigilant protocol for flea control. Most pets will find relief from itching within one to two days. Talk to your veterinarian to find what will work best for your pet.

Source: Dr. Carlo Vitale, San Francisco Veterinary Specialists