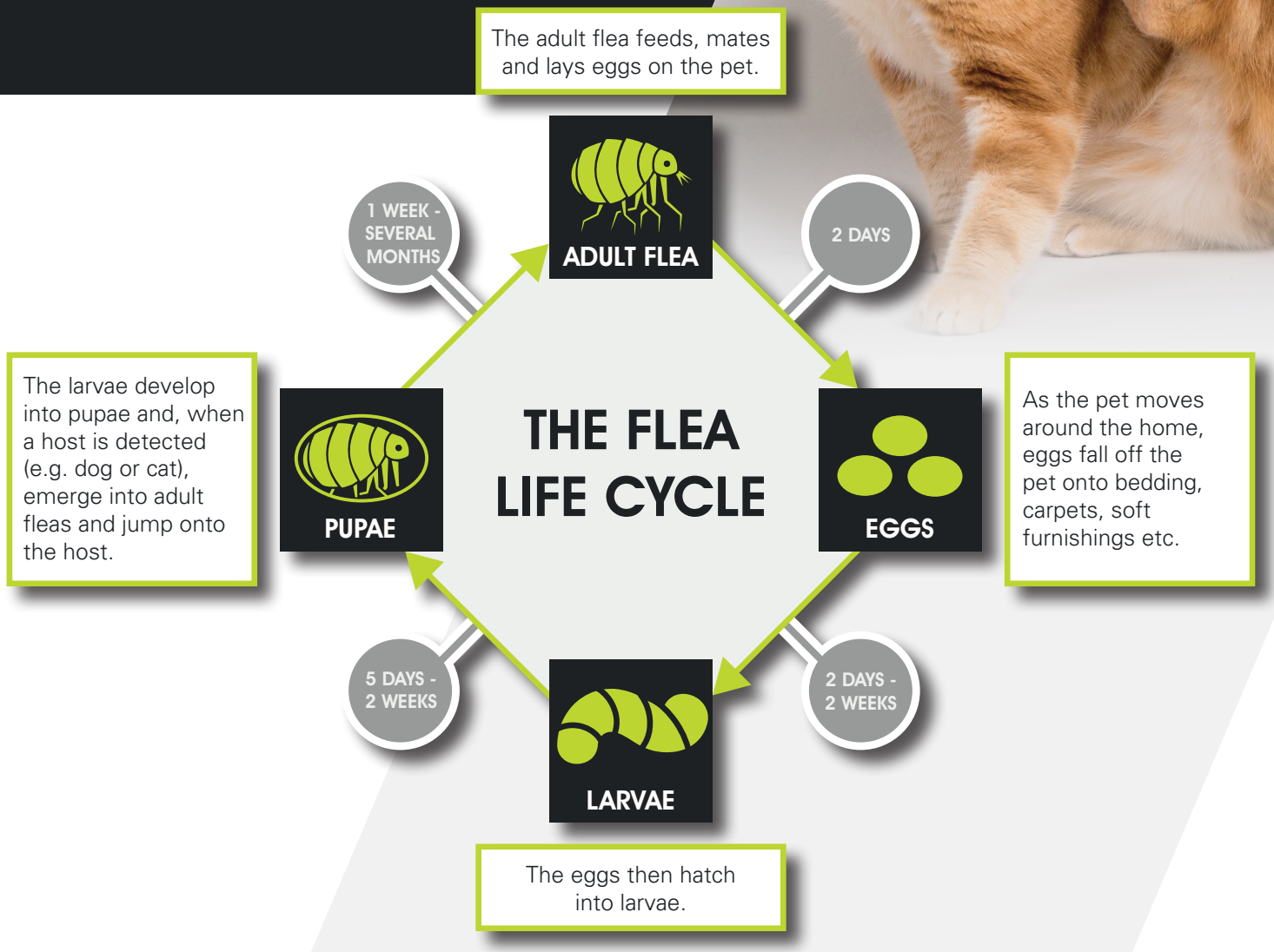
Avacta® ANIMAL HEALTH

INDOOR ALLERGENS

FLEAS

Fleas are a very common parasite that can significantly affect our pets. Not only do they cause irritation as they move around, and discomfort by biting, they can also transmit disease. Some pets also have a heightened response to flea bites (known as **flea allergic dermatitis**), which means they have an allergic response to flea saliva. In this situation, rather than just causing the usual irritation and discomfort, even just a few flea bites can trigger extremely itchy and inflamed skin.

When a pet becomes infested with fleas, it brings them back into the home. The adult flea lays up to 50 eggs a day and the flea life-cycle takes around 21 days to complete; this means that the number of fleas can very rapidly escalate and eradicating a flea infestation can take quite some time. See the diagram below for more information.



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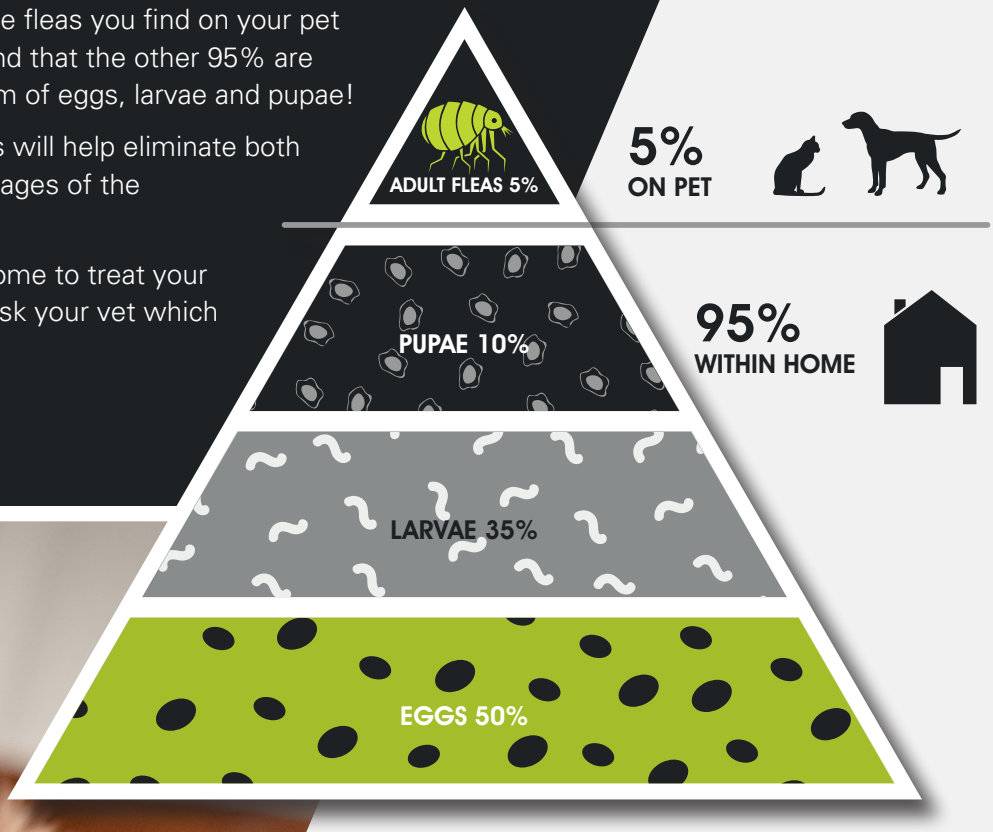
You may be shocked to learn that the fleas you find on your pet represent just 5% of the problem and that the other 95% are actually within your home in the form of eggs, larvae and pupae!

Using effective flea control products will help eliminate both the adult fleas, and also the other stages of the life cycle found in the environment.

There are many options available, some to treat your pet and some to treat your home. Ask your vet which would be the most suitable options.



TIPS TO REDUCE FLEAS

General guidance

- Treat all cats and dogs in the household with their own prescribed flea treatment. Ensure it is applied at the recommended intervals for that product.
- Wash pet bedding and clothing regularly.

If an infestation occurs

- In addition to all pets in the household being treated, ensure the environment including carpets, bedding and soft furnishings, are either washed, or treated with an appropriate product containing an insect growth regulator (IGR).
- After treating the environment, it is important to vacuum daily for 3 weeks. This encourages any pupae still present to hatch and come into contact with the insecticide. The pupae are not susceptible to any flea treatment so it is important to wait for them to hatch so they can be eliminated.

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HOUSE DUST MITES

These mites are very small, almost transparent, arachnids (mites have 8-legs like spiders). They eat dead skin flakes (epithelia) from both humans and pets. It is the dust mite droppings and dead body parts, rather than the live dust mites themselves, that provoke an allergic reaction when they are either inhaled (breathed in) or touched.

The mites live in bedding, upholstered furniture, carpets, curtains, mattresses and pillows. Removing dust mites completely from the environment is impossible, but please see below for some useful tips to help reduce their presence. Mites also like warm, damp conditions so our tips on reducing moulds can help too.

TIPS TO REDUCE HOUSE DUST MITES

- Vacuum or dry-clean your carpets, curtains and upholstery regularly. Use a vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter, if possible.
- Keep your pet outside whilst you are vacuuming and for a while afterwards, to allow time for any dust to settle.
- Avoid dry dusting, regularly wipe surfaces with a damp cloth instead.
- Reduce the amount of clutter in your home, for example remove books, magazines, ornaments etc.
- Reduce soft furnishings in your home e.g. replace carpets with hard floors, choose leather instead of upholstered furniture.
- Wash your pet's bedding and stuffed toys regularly above 60˚C or alternatively, freeze for 24 hours to kill the mites, then wash at a lower temperature to remove the dead mites and droppings.
- Use allergen proof pet bedding, if possible.
- Reduce your pet's access to one room or area of the house. Don't allow them to sleep in bedrooms as they are dust mite hot spots.
- Environmental sprays are available for treating surfaces in your home.

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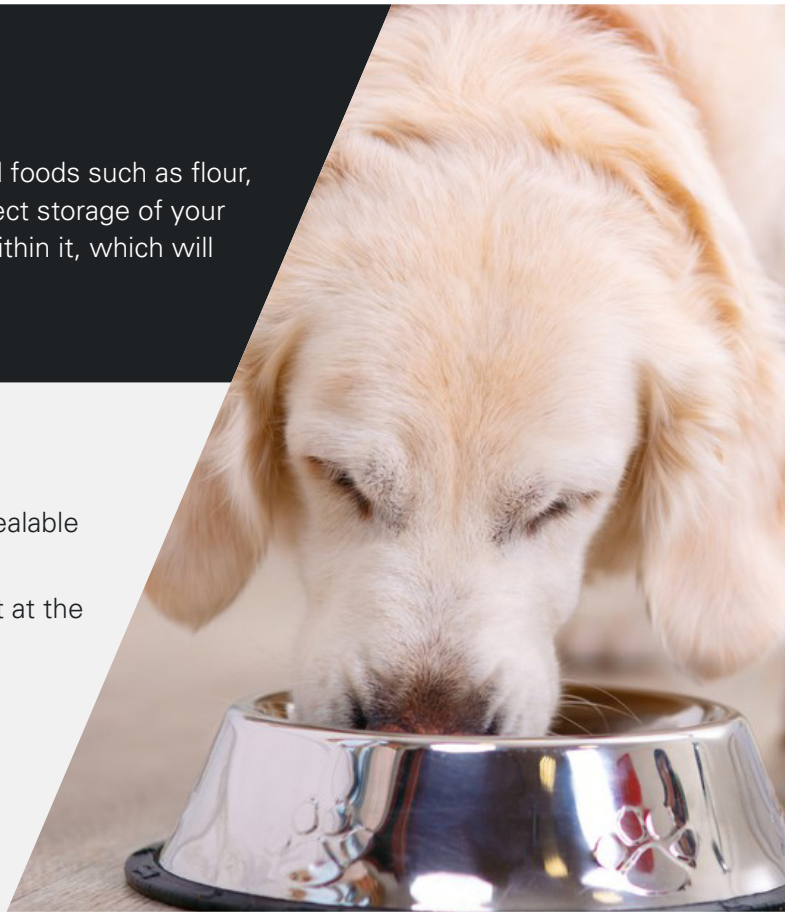
STORAGE MITES

Storage mites are tiny, white arachnids that feed on stored foods such as flour, grain and seeds; they can also be found in pet foods. Correct storage of your pet's food can help reduce the number of storage mites within it, which will decrease your pet's exposure to them.



TIPS ON FOOD STORAGE

- Keep dry food in its original packaging and place into resealable airtight plastic containers.
- Clean the plastic containers regularly, discarding any dust at the bottom. Dry completely before reusing.
- Keep the food in dry, cool conditions (take care if storing food in an outbuilding such as a garage as this is more likely to be damp).
- Buy only small bags of food rather than large bulk packs, to ensure fresher batches are fed.

CAT EPITHELIA (DANDER)

Some dogs (and people) have an allergic response to a protein that is found in the tiny flakes of dead skin (called **epithelia** or **dander**) that cats routinely shed (this dander becomes part of the dust in your home); the protein is also present in the cat's saliva, which sticks to the fur when the cat grooms itself. We recommend the following measures to help reduce your dog's exposure to cat dander:

TIPS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE

- Groom your cat at least once a week either outside or in a well-ventilated room, away from the dog.
- Vacuum frequently.
- Wash all pet bedding once a week.
- Wash your hands in-between handling the cat and the dog.
- Cat food which reduces the amount of allergen the cat produces is also available (check if suitable with your vet).

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MOULDS

Moulds can be found both inside and outside your home. They are a type of fungus and like warm, damp, and humid conditions best. Moulds spread by producing tiny spores, which are too small to see but float through the air. When these spores are inhaled (breathed in) or touched, they can cause both irritation and allergic reactions. Making the environment difficult for mould to live in will help reduce the amount of mould in your home. See tips below on ways of reducing mould.

Moulds can be found on:

- Carpets / textiles
- Behind paint
- Wallpaper
- Moist chipboard
- Stored grain / cereals
- Leather, wool and cotton
- Decaying plant debris
- House dust
- Window frames
- Water damaged buildings
- Soil
- Fruits and foods
- Compost heaps
- Forage

TIPS TO REDUCE MOULD

Reducing condensation:

- Increase ventilation in the kitchen and bathrooms by using extractor fans and/or opening windows.
- Close internal doors and open a window when cooking or bathing/showering, to encourage moist air to leave the house.
- Avoid drying clothes indoors and especially not on radiators. If this is unavoidable, tumble dry or air dry in a room inaccessible to your pet.
- Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier to keep humidity levels below 50%.
- Allow fresh air to circulate to avoid mould forming where the air is still.
- Wipe down windows that get wet on the inside daily.

Reducing exposure to mould:

- Clean any damp walls and treat with a mould inhibitor; seek professional advice to resolve underlying damp issues.
- Keep hard surfaces, window frames and window ledges mould free.
- Keep all pet bedding and clothing dry and clean.
- Don't overwater houseplants: it encourages mould in the soil.
- Avoid heavy vegetation around or over the house, e.g. ivy.
- Restrict access to garden debris and compost heaps.