

Cat flea

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The **cat flea**, ***Ctenocephalides felis***, is one of the most abundant and widespread **fleas** in the world.

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Overview

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The cat flea's primary host is the **domestic cat**, but this is also the primary flea infesting **dogs** in most of the world. The cat flea can also maintain its **life cycle** on other **carnivores** and on the **Virginia opossum**. **Rabbits**, **rodents**, **ruminants** and **humans** can be infested or bitten, but a population of cat fleas cannot be sustained by these aberrant hosts.^[*citation needed*]

Life cycle

[edit]



Photo showing some characteristics used to identify from other fleas, including genal comb

The female cat flea lays her eggs on the host, but the eggs, once dry, have evolved to filter out of the haircoat of the host into the resting and sheltering area of the host.

The eggs hatch into **larvae**, which are negatively **phototactic**, meaning that they hide from light in the substrate. Flea larvae feed on a variety of organic substances, but most importantly subsist on dried blood that is filtered out of the haircoat of the host after it is deposited there as adult flea fecal material. Thus the adult population on the host feeds the larval population in

the host's environment.



Flea fecal material, here combed from a cat, is also called *flea dirt*

Flea larvae metamorphose through 3 stages before spinning a **cocoon** and entering the **pupal stage**. The pupal stage varies greatly in length; the pre-emergent flea does not normally emerge as a young adult flea until the presence of a potential host is perceived by warmth, vibration or carbon dioxide production. Newly emerged fleas are stimulated to jump to a new host within seconds of emerging from the cocoon. The new flea begins feeding on host blood within minutes.^[1]^[2]^[3]

Effects on the hosts

[edit]

A few fleas on adult dogs or cats cause little harm unless the host becomes **allergic** to substances in saliva. The disease that results is called **flea allergy dermatitis**. Small animals with large infestations can lose enough blood to fleas feeding that **anemia** may result. Fleas are also responsible for disease transmission.

Disease transmission

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Cat fleas can transmit other **parasites** and infections to dogs and cats and also to humans. The most prominent of these are *Bartonella*, the tapeworm *Dipylidium caninum*, and *murine typhus*.

References

[edit]

- Flea, University of Florida IFAS Extension [↗]
- Purdue University Medical Entomology [↗]
- Rust M K, Dryden MW: The Biology, Ecology, and Management of the cat flea [↗]

External links

[edit]

- **cat flea** [↗] on the **UF / IFAS** Featured Creatures Web site

Flea Treatment

[edit]

- How to Rid Your Pet of Fleas from Wikihow [↗]
- Cat Flea (Ctenocephalides felis) Problem And Treatment [↗]

Cat flea



Cat Flea Ctenocephalides felis

Scientific classification

- Domain: **Eukaryota**
- Kingdom: **Animalia**
- Phylum: **Arthropoda**
- Class: **Insecta**
- Order: **Siphonaptera**
- Family: **Pulicidae**
- Genus: ***Ctenocephalides***
- Species: ***C. felis***

Binomial name

Ctenocephalides felis
(Bouché, 1835)



Flea larva showing red ingested blood

- [Finding and Eliminating Fleas on Your Cat from the BBC](#)
- [Pet Products to Control Pests from the US Food and Drug Administration](#)

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