

Flea Biology

Adult fleas are parasites of warm-blooded furred animals such as cats, dogs, and humans. Fleas go through complete metamorphosis: egg, larva, pupa, and adult stages. Under most situations, fleas will complete their life cycle within 3-5 weeks.

The female flea will lay 4-6 eggs after each blood meal and can usually lay several hundred eggs during her lifetime. The light-colored eggs are deposited while on the host, but they fall off the animal and are frequently found in the host's bedding, carpets, sofas, and crevices in the floor. The eggs normally hatch within 1-10 days, depending on temperature and humidity, while most hatch within 36 hours.

Flea larvae are slender, white, legless and between 1/10 and 1/5-inches in length. The larval stage usually lasts between 5-11 days but can be extended up to 3 weeks if conditions are not favorable. Flea larvae are very sensitive to heat and desiccation, so thrive in shaded, protected areas.

Most flea adults will emerge from the pupal stage in 5-10 days. If a host is not present, the fleas can remain in the pupal stage for over 140 days. Adult fleas emergence from the pupal stage by the host's body heat, movement and exhaled carbon dioxide. This stage is the most resistant to pesticides and desiccation.

Flea populations can exist indoors for extended periods of time without a host animal.

