

Flea onslaught strikes early in the season

Written by By Sam Mazzota King Syndicate
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DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I can't believe it — it's only March, and my cat Flicker is already scratching himself silly with fleas! He has terrible skin reactions to flea bites. How can I get rid of them? — Jesse B., Oak Ridge, Tennessee

DEAR JESSE: Flea infestations are awful, aren't they? As the seasons change and the weather warms up, flea activity rises, and pet owners start seeing more evidence of fleas on their pets and around their homes.

Fleas aren't just annoying. They can carry diseases that are transmissible to pets and humans. Tapeworms and cat scratch disease are just two of the potential ills that a flea infestation can bring into your home.

Tackle a flea problem head-on, and don't wait — because it will continue to get worse as the summer approaches. Because of Flicker's allergic reaction to flea bites, he needs direct treatment to repel fleas and prevent them from latching onto his fur again.

Talk to his veterinarian about the most effective flea treatments. For example, a monthly or quarterly topical flea treatment may be a good option. Oral medication — as pills or chewables — is also very effective. The vet may also recommend medication to clear up his current skin issues.

Reduce the risk of another flea infestation by making your home difficult for fleas to exist in:

Have your home treated for fleas by a pest control service.

Pick up clutter from the floor and replace any plush or felted toys with new ones.

Vacuum twice a week to pick up fleas and their eggs.

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Repair or replace damaged window and door screens.

Remove any debris piles near your home, and shift wood piles farther away.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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