

How Did My Indoor Cat Get Fleas?

CatChannel expert Jeanne Adlon, professional cat sitter, discusses fleas and how to get rid of them.

By Jeanne Adlon

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Q: My indoor cat has gotten fleas. How can that happen and what can I do to get rid of them?

A: Years ago when I was very involved with animal rescue, I had a real flea infestation in my house, and it was not pleasant. Fleas are hardy buggers and can attach themselves to clothing and shoes. Little did I know that when I was outside helping animals, I was also bringing some unwelcome "guests" back inside.

There are many good products now available to help rid your home and kitty of fleas. You can purchase topical treatments which are placed on the back of the neck and the base of the skull, plus oral tablets and flea sprays from your local vet and pet stores. And there is always a flea shampoo, but I recommend that only for the truly strong of heart. Baths and cats are usually not a happy mix, so I would suggest a professional groomer.

Meanwhile, I can also make a suggestion which does not require sprays and soaps and has worked for me throughout the years — debittered brewers yeast. I learned about it from a friend who has a large farm in Pennsylvania. She cares for a feral-cat colony — all of which are spayed and neutered (we all want to help control the cat population). Even though my friend has names for all her furry charges, they really are feral and she can't get close enough to administer flea treatments. Fortunately, she discovered that sprinkling debittered brewers yeast on their dry food helps with flea control. It seems that the odor of the debittered yeast as it is being digested repels the fleas. Pet shops usually sell it in tablet form, and it also helps keep cats' coats healthier so you get a double benefit.

As always, check with your vet as to which products are safe. This is particularly true of real infestations that may require special sprays and flea bombs. Also please follow all instructions carefully to ensure a safe and flea-free zone.