

Flea Control

Flea control has never been easier, or safer for the whole family. Strong, smart, safe chemical products are now available, and many only require a once-a-month application. You can still find those harsh insecticides in over-the-counter preparations, but why would you use them?

To manage fleas safely and effectively, it is important to eradicate both immature and mature forms of the flea. The immature forms can be controlled with insect growth regulators such as pyriproxyfen, methoprene, and fenoxycarb, or the related insect development inhibitor lufenuron (Program). These compounds don't kill fleas, but they do stop any fleas that ever bite a dog from producing eggs that will hatch.

To get rid of adult fleas, a selection of very safe insecticides have become available, and many offer month-long control. Some of the better-known once-a-month compounds include selamectin (Revolution®), fipronil (Frontline™), and imidacloprid (Advantage®). Many of these products, either alone or in combination, will control other parasites as well, such as ticks, ear mites, and even sarcoptic mange. These new wonder products have dramatic effects on fleas, but it may take 24 hours for that full effect to be realized. Not to worry. For those that need to hit fleas hard and see the effects in a shorter time, a new oral product, nitenpyram (Capstar®), will kill 98-100 percent of fleas on your dog within three to four hours! Nitenpyram can be used on an as-needed basis for flea infestation, but it doesn't pack the 30-day residual control of the other preparations.

How about the home environment? Vacuuming, and application of a safe insecticide, together with the use an insect growth regulator or borate-containing compound will effectively and safely control fleas in the indoor environment. Borate-containing products that are EPA approved for broadcast application and that have been evaluated by scientific study are the only products to be recommended.

Outdoor flea control can be effectively maintained with insecticides and biological agents. A microencapsulated chlorpyrifos is probably the most convenient and efficacious insecticide to use, but diazinon, carbaryl and malathion are other options. More recently, nematodes (worms) have been utilized for environmental flea control. The nematode *Steinernema carpocapsae* can be applied to lawns, sand and gardens and they attack flea larvae and pupae. The effective anti-flea effects are evident for approximately one month, at which time the nematodes can be reapplied. They appear to be extremely safe and to not harm beneficial insects. After application the areas must be watered weekly and the nematodes cannot tolerate temperatures less than 45F or greater than 95F.

So, whether you're looking for a full month of flea control, fast flea death, flea control without actually killing fleas, an oral preparation, or a dab-on medication, there's a flea control product that's just right for Ledger. So, be environmentally conscious and don't use products that poison you and your pets while attempting to get rid of fleas.