

# Fleas keep us Hopping mad!



**Do you have cats or dogs?**

**Even if you don't, you are probably familiar with fleas.**

Dogs, cats, birds, bats, squirrels, and even people have all been itching and scratching for thousands of years because of fleas. Hungry fleas pierce into skin with their sharp mouthparts and drink from the pool of blood they create. Germs in their saliva can make people and animals sick.

Some dogs go nuts chewing and scratching at fleas, sometimes even making their skin red and raw. They are actually allergic to the flea's saliva and usually need medicine from a veterinarian (animal doctor) to feel better. Of course, they need *your* help too. Don't allow your pets to roam free and be sure to ask your vet about flea repellants for your pets.



Fleas on dog's nose

Fleas are small insects with no wings. Unlike mosquitoes, both males and females bite. There are hundreds of different kinds of fleas, and each one is specially designed to survive. Their flattened bodies are covered with spines and they have hooked feet which help them stay in an animals fur when they scratch. Their hind legs work like springs to launch them amazing distances into the air, and they can actually smell the breath of approaching animals!



## Have you ever heard of the plague or "black death"?

Between 1300 and 1800 AD, this disease killed up to 37 million **people** in Europe and England after they were bitten by infected rat fleas!

*Who would have guessed such a little critter could cause such a huge problem.*

We still find plague around here in prairie dogs, ground squirrels and other animals, but the chances of us getting sick are pretty small. It is still a good idea to *never* feed or handle wild animals, or camp near the entrance to their burrows. It's also wise to keep your pets on leashes and talk to your veterinarian about flea repellants for your cats or dogs.

**Believe  
It  
or  
Not!**

The nursery rhyme *Ring Around the Rosy* was actually written long ago about the plague. The words "ring around the rosy" referred to the bright red sores on the skin of a person infected with plague. A "pocket full of posies" was a bunch of herbs and flowers the people believed would keep them free from the disease. "Ashes, Ashes, we all fall down" refers to the fear many had that they would die from the plague.

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