

# Dog Flea

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**Description:** 1/16 inch; small wingless insects; pale to dark reddish brown with a flattened (skinny) body. This body design allows easy movement between hairs of animal fur. The body parts are heavily armored and segmented, with numerous backward spines and bristles to aid sticking to the fur. Claws at the tips of the legs also enable the flea to stay attached to the fur even when the animal shakes or scratches vigorously.



The eyes resemble ocelli (simple eyes) in structure and there are two short antennae (3 segmented) concealed in grooves on the head. Six long legs allow the insect to make lateral jumps of up to 14 to 16 inches. Fleas use their piercing mouth parts (needle-like structures) to penetrate the skin, form a channel and draw blood from the host into its mouth area.

**Diet:** Fleas are parasitic and suck blood of birds and mammals. The larval stage eats organic debris left in animal beds or dander and dead skin that collects in dust balls. Both male and female fleas suck blood, preferring a particular kind of animal (like cat or dog) according to their species. If food is scarce an adult can go one to two months without eating. In the absence of a preferred animal they will bite other animals and humans.

**Habitat:** Among the hair of dogs.