# Flea and Tick: FAD Defined

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

## WHAT IS flea allergy dermatitis?

**DOES YOUR CAT** frequently bite at the base of his tail? Or, has the hair above his tail begun to thin? Worse, is your cat's skin red and inflamed? Unfortunately, these are some signs of flea allergy dermatitis (FAD). But there are things you and your veterinarian can do to help.

### FAD DEFINED

Flea allergy dermatitis is an allergic reaction to flea bites. During a flea bite, saliva is passed into your cat's bloodstream. This salvia contains over 15 allergens that can cause allergic reactions. Severely affected cats may itch over their entire body, have generalized hair loss, experience red, inflamed skin, or develop hot spots.

### DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF FAD

Your veterinarian uses visual cues and an intradermal skin test to diagnose FAD. Treatment usually involves a monthly topical to prevent further contact with fleas. However, topicals need to both kill and repel fleas. Monthly topicals can also be used with an oral product that prevents the flea eggs from hatching and breaks the flea life cycle.

In severe cases, antihistamines or oral steroids may also be used to help control itching. Environmental control of fleas is also essential. Products that kill adult fleas and inhibit the growth of immature forms are best. Treat every area of your home your cat frequents. Other pets should also be treated to help prevent them from continuing to bring fleas into your cat's environment.

### HELP YOUR CAT COPE WITH FAD

Your veterinarian may also recommend topical therapy or nutritional supplements to help control the itching and inflamed skin associated with FAD. Topical therapy offers immediate, but short-term itch relief, usually in the form of hypo-allergenic or oatmeal shampoos. Nutritional supplements rich in Omega-3 fatty acids, such as our Vitacaps®, may also help. However, most cats need to take these supplements for several weeks to months to notice a significant improvement. But these supplements are safe, convenient, and economical to use.

## RECOMMENDED FLEA & TICK PRODUCTS

Frontline Plus® for Cats

Advantage® Flea Control for Cats

Drs. Foster & Smith Oatmeal Shampoo

Drs. Foster & Smith Vitacaps®



*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*