

Flea



Fleas are external parasites, living by hematophagy off the blood of mammals and birds. Fleas are small (1/16 to 1/8 long), agile, usually dark colored (for example, the reddish-brown of the cat flea), wingless insects with tube-like mouthparts adapted to feeding on the blood of their hosts. Their bodies are laterally compressed (that is, flattened side to side), permitting easy movement through the hairs or feathers on the host's body (or in the case of humans, under clothes).

Their legs are long, the hind pair well adapted for jumping (vertically up to seven inches; horizontally thirteen inches) around 200 times their own body length, making the flea the best jumper out of all animals (in comparison to body size). The flea body is hard, polished, and covered with many hairs and short spines directed backward, which also assists its movements on the host. Its tough body is able to withstand great pressure, likely an adaptation to survive scratching etc. Even hard squeezing between the fingers is normally insufficient to kill the flea.



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