

Ringworm

(Dermatophytosis)

General Information

Ringworm is a fungal infection; it is not caused by any type of worm. The fungus (dermatophytes) feed upon dead hair and skin cells. The ring like appearance of ringworm is primarily found in humans. Dry, grey, scaly patches are commonly found on pets that are infected.

All it takes to get this infection is skin contact with a spore. Ringworm is zoonotic, which means that it is passed between animals and humans. You should handle your infected pet as little as possible and wash your hands after handling your pet. Exposure of other animals to your pet should also be avoided. In some cases an animal can be a carrier of ringworm, showing no signs of infection, but can still infect others.

Diagnosis

The most effective way to diagnose ringworm is with a fungal culture. Hair and skin samples are taken from the animal and placed on a special culture medium. The purpose of this is to grow the ringworm fungus. The advantage of this test is that it can accurately confirm ringworm. The disadvantage is that it takes about 10-14 days for growth and results.

Treatment

Commitment is essential for success in the treatment of ringworm. Treatment is generally carried out for 1-2 months and should not be discontinued just because the pet appears to be healed. Animals infected with ringworm are continuously dropping spore-covered hairs into the environment.

Treatment for your pet:

- Itraconazole is a highly effective medication for treating ringworm; however it can cause liver problems.
- Hexadene shampoo is an effective topical antifungal solution.
- Conofite lotion is a topical antifungal agent used in both cats and dogs. A light covering is applied to the affected area once daily for two to four weeks.

Treatment for the environment:

- It can be helpful to shave the infected animal and confine them to one room that can be easily disinfected.
- The most important part of disinfecting the environment is vacuuming, this should be done 3 times weekly and the bag disposed of.
- Any hard surfaces that can be bleached should be cleaned with bleach and water (with a 1:10 mixture). Surfaces being bleached should stay wet for at least 10 minutes in order to kill all spores. This should be done at least 3 times a week.
- Air filters should be changed frequently.
- The pets bedding should be washed frequently