

Dermatophytosis (ringworm)

Dermatology Service



Michigan Veterinary SpecialistsSM

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Locations

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What is ringworm?

Dermatophytosis (ringworm) is a fungal infection of the hair, superficial skin and occasionally nails. Three species of ringworm cause the majority of infections: *Microsporum canis*, *Microsporum gypseum* and *Trichophyton mentagrophytes*.

The most common sources of infection are other infected pets, rodents, contaminated environments and occasionally the soil. Some animals may act as carriers of the disease with no visible lesions (asymptomatic carrier). This is more commonly seen in cats with *M. canis* infections. *M. canis* can also live in the environment for at least 13 months making re-infection a common problem. Other pets may come in contact with ringworm but never develop an infection. Infection involves more than just exposure to the fungus. Host factors like immunity and stress are also involved.

People who come in contact with infected animals are at risk of developing ringworm. As with animals, many individuals who are exposed will not develop infection. Please consult your physician concerning this matter. You should also wash your hands well after handling your pet and use good hygiene.

Symptoms

The clinical signs of infection are most commonly hair loss, broken hairs and increased pigmentation of the skin. Other signs may include red bumps, itching, crusting, scaling and occasionally pus. When the nails are affected they may be broken and brittle, which may result in loss of nails or nail deformities.

Diagnosis & Treatment

The diagnosis of ringworm is based on Wood's light examination, fungal cultures and/or skin biopsy. Cultures may take up to two weeks to grow.

Therapy for ringworm includes elimination of organisms contaminating the environment, treatment of affected pets and control of asymptomatic carriers. The termination of treatment is based on physical exam and having three negative fungal cultures 2-3 weeks apart.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

- Isolate or confine affected pets
- Vacuum daily – throw out bag (put in sealed bag)
- Clorox solution (1:20 dilution) on hard surfaces
- Change air filters every 14 days

TREATMENT OF PETS

- Clip hair – entire body in severe cases or long haired cats
- Topical therapies (shampoos, lotions, creams)
- Lime sulfur dip solution (1 oz per quart of water) twice weekly – topically sponge entire body
- Oral medication

