



# RINGWORM

Ringworm is a term that is commonly used for a fungal infection of the skin. Despite the name, there are no 'worms' involved. The name came about as the fungus often causes a 'ring' shaped red lesion on the skin. Ringworm is relatively common in rabbits, guinea pigs, rats, mice and ferrets and is a zoonotic disease meaning that it can be transferred to people.

Lesions usually arise on or about the head or ears and are characterized by patchy alopecia, broken hairs, redness and yellowish crusting. The lesions are often inflamed and may spread secondarily to the paws, especially the toenail beds, and to other areas of the body.

## **Medical Treatments**

Ringworm is usually self-limiting, however in some cases treatment is recommended. This can be achieved with oral and/or topical medications such as washes or creams. Often the hair around the area needs to be shaved to allow any topical medications to reach the area. A reduction of stress and improved environmental conditions are also important elements in helping resolve the ringworm infection.

## **Environmental Treatments**

Ringworm is caused by a few different types of fungi known as dermatophytes. Many of these can persist in the environment for long periods of time (several years in some cases). The fungal spores are microscopic and can be spread easily by air currents and contaminated dust and through heating ducts and vents. Environmental decontamination is a very important part of treatment and without it many pets (and people) become re-infected.

### *Disinfection Protocol*

- \* Discard or remove and clean all rugs, blankets, collars, brushes, and fabric toys. Discard any other object that cannot be repeatedly vacuumed, scrubbed, and disinfected.
- \* If possible, put a fan in the window so it draws air out of the room to the outside. Thoroughly vacuum all surfaces of the room. Dust all surfaces and ledges with a disposable cloth. These disposable cloths can be used regularly to trap spores and dust missed by the vacuuming process.
- \* Scrub all surfaces with a detergent. Rinse all surfaces well. Apply a 1:10 dilution of bleach to all nonporous surfaces. Leave the bleach solution on for at least 10 minutes for maximal fungicidal action. Always use appropriate ventilation.





## Monitoring treatment

Dermatophyte infections usually resolve without treatment within 60 to 100 days if the animal affected has a competent immune system. If they are ill or have a defective immune response, infection can persist. Animals receiving topical and systemic antifungal therapy usually show a marked improvement in clinical signs within two to four weeks of starting therapy. However, it can take much longer for the infection to be totally eradicated. If your pet has been clipped it may take months for the entire coat to regrow.

Concurrent illness, certain medications, or a defective immune system can also make recovery take much longer.

If you are at all concerned about your pet or would like more information please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

