



## RINGWORM

### ABOUT THE DISEASE

**Ringworm** is a fungal infection of the skin that is also referred to as **dermatophytosis**. This contagious infection can affect the skin and hair of cats, dogs, and other animals, as well as humans. The most common type of **ringworm** is transmitted directly from one patient to another. But two other types of **ringworm** can be found in the soil and on rodents.

The infected skin with hair loss tends to enlarge in a circular pattern as the organism continuously infects more skin and hair at the edges of the area. However, some infected feline patients will show no symptoms but act as carriers and transmit to other canine and feline patients.

### OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

The signs and symptoms of **ringworm** are similar to several other skin diseases, so the diagnosis cannot be made by appearance alone.

An ultraviolet lamp can sometimes be utilized to highlight the organism on the skin but is often unreliable.

The diagnostic of choice is a fungal culture that may take up to two weeks to grow and culture positive. Fungal cultures should be repeated before stopping oral antifungal medications to be certain the infection has been completely eliminated.

### TREATMENT

Most pets will have an immune response to the fungus that will eventually eliminate the infection. However, treatment is needed to speed up the process and to prevent the spread of the **ringworm** to other pets and humans.

Oral antifungal medications are more effective than topical medications and creams, but both may be required.

Fungicidal dips also help reduce the infectiveness of remaining hairs.

If a patient is being treated with glucocorticoids or medications suppressing the immune system, they should ideally be reduced or discontinued to maximize success.

The entire house should be carefully cleaned to remove pet hairs. Frequent vacuuming and cleaning is needed to remove infected hairs from the environment. All pet bedding and grooming equipment should be disinfected or destroyed.

**Ringworm** may require upwards of three months to achieve success. Although, nail infections may require a much longer treatment, upwards of 6 to 12 months.

### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- All infected patients must be treated to eliminate **ringworm** and prevent its spread.
- The house and environment need to be cleaned regularly to reduce dander and hair.
- Infected pets should be isolated from other pets and humans.
- Don't automatically assume that a round area of hair loss can only be due to **ringworm**. There are many other skin disorders, especially in dogs, that have a similar appearance.
- Veterinarians can only provide medical advice for animals. Humans must seek medical advice from their physicians.
- Wear disposable gloves to avoid contracting the infection from the pet when applying topical treatments.