

Treating Ringworm

A Customized Treatment Plan

Step 1: *Identification of Exposed Animals*

Ringworm is a contagious skin disease spread through direct contact with an infected animal or indirect contact from spores that fall into the environment. **If you have no other pets in the home or if your pet has not contacted other animals, skip to step 2.**

Using a new toothbrush, comb the hair coat of the pet. Be sure to brush the face, inside and near the ears, between the toes, and tail. **Don't skip any part!** Put the toothbrush in a self-sealing plastic bag and label the outside. Repeat for all pets in the home. Put all bags in another plastic bag and bring to the veterinary clinic. **Pending culture results (7-21 days), exposed animals should be treated with a topical antifungal rinse. Usually you can use the same product selected for your pet with ringworm.**

Step 2: *Treatment and Monitoring*

The following are the key treatment decisions that need to be made to successfully treat an infected pet.

Which Oral Antifungal Is Best For My Pet?

Oral antifungal drugs are used to kill or inhibit the growth of the ringworm infection inside the hair follicle. There are several different drugs available for use. The most commonly used drugs include itraconazole, terbinafine, fluconazole and griseofulvin. **Lufenuron has been found to be ineffective in the treatment and/or prevention of ringworm**

To Clip or Not to Clip

Clipping the hair coat mechanically removes infected hairs and spores. Clipping will help minimize contamination of the environment. Although always "ideal", clipping is not always needed. Some situations where it is strongly recommended include pets with long hair, pets with severe infections, pets that are not responding to treatment, and pets that share a home with a person or child that has a serious illness. If clipping is not possible or desirable, other options are plucking or clipping glowing hairs, and clipping obvious lesions with rounded blunt-tipped scissors.

Topical Therapy

Focal topical therapy using ointments, creams and lotions is not recommended. Bathing pets instead of or prior to the use of an antifungal rinse is not recommended. Bathing may cause fragile hairs to break and spill spores on the hair coat, increase exposure of the pet owner to the infected lesions, or make healthy hairs more susceptible to infection because bathing softens the protective cuticle. **HOWEVER**, there are some pets that have other skin diseases or situations where bathing prior to the use of antifungal rinse is needed.

Topical Antifungal Rinses

Lime sulfur, miconazole-chlorhexidine or enilconazole are the only topical antifungal rinses that have been shown to be consistently antifungal. At this time, enilconazole is not available in the United States. Topical solutions should be carefully diluted. Use warm water and apply thoroughly to the hair coat. Garden sprayers or watering cans are ideal. Press the spout as close to the skin as possible, and shower and coat the hairs from the skin out. Towel application is acceptable, but be sure to thoroughly SOAK the skin. Do not rinse the solution off. Wear protective goggles. Use a sponge or cloth to treat the face.

Monitoring Treatment

Pets are treated until there are two negative consecutive fungal cultures at weekly intervals. Ideally, pets should be cultured weekly, This will most rapidly identify fungal cure.

Step 3: *Managing Environmental Conditions*

Just as in flea infestations where eggs and fleas are shed into the environment, pets with ringworm infections will shed infective spores as small dust-sized particles. The following will minimize spread of potentially infective spores.

- Removal of infected hairs by clipping.
- Use of lime sulfur as a topical antifungal rinse. It is quickly sporocidal.
- Confinement of the infected pet to one easily cleaned room and keep closets closed. Discard contaminated toys and wash bedding daily.
- Routine cleaning of home daily and use of the triple cleaning technique (see below) once weekly. This technique was found to control infection in homes with infected cats and to be very successful in decontaminating homes once pets were cured.

Triple Cleaning Technique: Remove gross contamination via vacuuming the area three times followed by washing the area with a detergent safe to use around cats. Wash area three times. Apply a 1:10 dilution of bleach to non-porous areas.

Determining if the Home is Decontaminated

After the pet has been cured, thoroughly clean the home using the triple cleaning technique. One hour after surfaces are dry, wipe target areas with a small 5x5 inch section

of Swiffer cloth until soiled. Put cloth in a self-sealing plastic bag, label and submit to your veterinarian for culture. This technique will readily detect spores.

This article was written by Dr. Karen Moriello and Dr. Sandra Newbury