Adopting a Cat with Ringworm

Ringworm is a common fungal infection that can be treated and cured with proper care. This guide will discuss ringworm, how it's treated and tips for adopting a cat with ringworm.

This guide provides general information and is not a substitute for veterinary care. If you think your cat may have ringworm, consult with your veterinarian for evaluation and treatment.

WHAT IS RINGWORM?

Ringworm is a fungal infection of a cat's skin, hair and nails. It's similar to athlete's foot in people and can look like hair loss, scaly skin, a circle-shaped rash and/or irritated red skin. It spreads through direct contact with fungal spores in the environment or with an infected animal. It can stay on surfaces that cats touch like clothing, furniture, bedding, carpet and grooming tools for a long time, so thorough cleaning and disinfection is important when treating ringworm.

Ringworm can spread to both other animals (including dogs) and people. Those with a weakened immune system or who are more vulnerable to infections like kittens, senior cats, children and the elderly are more likely to get ringworm.

HOW IS RINGWORM TREATED?

Ringworm in a healthy animal often resolves on its own with time but is typically treated with oral and/or topical medications, like lime sulphur dips, to help speed healing and prevent it from spreading and reinfecting. After a cat has been treated with a series of lime sulphur dips or medications, they will be far less contagious.

ADOPTING A CAT BEING TREATED FOR RINGWORM

Different kinds of fungi can cause ringworm. Certain types of fungal infections causing ringworm are less contagious than others, so some infected cats can be adopted while undergoing treatment and finish it at home. This benefits the cat as they can be treated in a less stressful home environment, heal faster and bond with their family sooner.



You can still spend time with your cat over the few weeks while they're being treated with the following precautions. These steps should be taken to prevent the spread of ringworm until your veterinarian has confirmed the ringworm is resolved.

For homes with no immunocompromised people or animals at home:

- Wash hands, change and wash clothes after spending time with your cat.
- Keep the infected cat away from other pets in an easily cleanable area, such as a room with non-carpeted flooring, until their treatment is complete.

For homes with immunocompromised people or animals at higher risk of getting ringworm, like senior cats or kittens:

1. Keep Cat Separate
    - Separate the infected cat from other animals until their treatment is complete.
        - Keep them in an area that can be easily cleaned and where fungal spores can't linger as easily, like a room with tile or vinyl surfaces.

2. Protect Yourself and Handle Fabrics Safety
    - Wear disposable gloves when interacting with your cat and wash your hands after spending time with them.
    - Change your clothes and wash them separately from other laundry after spending time in their area.
    - Wash fabrics that the cat has come in contact with, like bedding, fabric toys and clothing, separately from other laundry.

3. Choose Easy-to-Clean Supplies
    - Use non-porous supplies, such as ceramic or stainless-steel bowls, that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
    - Choose machine-washable fabrics or disposable items, such as cardboard, for items that are difficult to clean.
    - Avoid traditional scratching posts, which can be difficult to clean and disinfect. Instead, provide disposable scratching materials, such as corrugated cardboard.

4. Clean and Disinfect Daily
    - Clean the supplies they use and the area they live in on a daily basis.
    - First, remove dirt, fur and debris from surfaces by vacuuming, using disposable dusters or cleaning with an appropriate detergent. Steam cleaning may also be suitable for certain surfaces.

- After cleaning, disinfect surfaces with a product labelled as effective against ringworm-causing fungi, following the product's instructions. Options may include accelerated hydrogen peroxide products, such as Oxivir or Accel PREVention.
- A bleach solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water may also be appropriate for compatible surfaces. Allow the surface to remain wet for 10 minutes.

If animals or people develop ringworm symptoms, visit a veterinarian or doctor.

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