

## Sporotrichosis

### Rose Handler's Disease

#### What is sporotrichosis and what causes it?

Sporotrichosis (spore-O-trick-O-sis) is caused by the fungus, *Sporothrix schenckii* (spore-O-thrix shank-EEE-eye). The fungus grows in the environment and can survive for months or years in soil, vegetation, and wood. Sporotrichosis occurs worldwide, particularly in areas with high humidity and temperatures. In the U.S., the fungus is found in the southern coastal regions and the Missouri and Mississippi River valleys.

#### What animals can get sporotrichosis?

Sporotrichosis occurs most often in horses. Cases have also been seen in cats, dogs, rodents, cattle, goats, swine, mules, camels, non-human primates, birds, and various wild animals.

#### How can my animal get sporotrichosis?

Animals can become infected after fungal spores enter a break in the skin (**direct contact**). Spores may be found in dead vegetation, wood splinters, sphagnum moss, thorns or hay, or carried on the bodies of birds, insects, and other animals. Infected cats may have the fungus on the outside of their claws (from soil contact), in their mouth or nasal cavity and may transmit the organism by bites and scratches.

#### How does sporotrichosis affect my animal?

Disease can develop 7 days to 3 months after exposure. In horses, the lower limbs, particularly the fetlocks, are most often affected. One or more firm, round bumps or nodules occur at the site of infection. Additional

bumps may follow and spread up the leg. The lesions may ulcerate and drain, then crust and scab. The nodules may become hard and contribute to generalized swelling of the affected leg.

In cats, sores most commonly occur on the paws, base of the tail or head. Lesions begin as small draining wounds that eventually form nodules; then ulcerate, leaving large areas of exposed, raw tissue. The bacteria can spread throughout the body and cause more severe disease and death.

#### Can I get sporotrichosis?

Yes. People are most commonly exposed from the environment. Wounds or other minor injuries that result in broken skin (e.g., rose thorn punctures) provides an entry site for the fungal spores (**direct contact**). Lesions occur most often on the arms or hands. Some human cases have resulted from scratches from infected cats.

Initially, a small, reddened, painless bump develops where the fungal spores entered the body. Additional

nodules may develop and ulcerate. Healing can be very slow, taking months to years if not treated. Infection of the lungs or spread throughout the body is rare, but can be fatal.

#### Who should I contact, if I suspect sporotrichosis?

##### In Animals –

Contact your veterinarian.

##### In Humans –

Contact your physician.

#### How can I protect my animal from sporotrichosis?

It is difficult to prevent infections acquired from the environment. Prevent spread of disease between animals by avoiding or isolating animals with known infection. Keep cats indoors to minimize interactions, especially fighting.


#### How can I protect myself from sporotrichosis?

Wear gloves when working in gardens, with soil or rose bushes, sphagnum moss, hay bales, wires, pine seedlings, or other plant materials to prevent punctures of the skin. Long sleeve shirts and long pants can also provide protection and minimize risk. Gloves should also be worn when handling or treating affected animals. After glove removal, remember to wash hands thoroughly.

#### For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Sporotrichosis at <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/>

CDC website. Sporotrichosis at <http://www.cdc.gov/fungal/sporotrichosis/>



**Sporotrichosis**  
is caused by a fungus  
found in the environment.  
Entry occurs through  
breaks in the skin.

Photos from: Wadsworth Center of the New York State Department of Health.