

Sporotrichosis

Rose Handler's Disease

What is sporotrichosis and what causes it?

Sporotrichosis (spore-O-trick-O-sis) is caused by the fungus, *Sporothrix shenckii* (spore-O-thrix shank-EEE-eye). The fungus grows in the environment and can survive for months or years in soil, vegetation, wood, and other objects. 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?

The disease is acquired from the environment when fungal spores enter a break or abrasion in the skin (**direct contact**). Spores may be in dead vegetation, wood splinters, sphagnum moss, thorns or hay, or carried on the bodies of birds, insects, and other animals. Bites, stings, pecks, and scratches can "inject" the organism. Infected cats can carry the fungus on their nails and in their mouth and nasal cavity and may transmit the organism by bites and scratches.

How does sporotrichosis affect my animal?

Disease usually develops 1 week to 3 months after exposure to the fungal spores. 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. These lesions

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may ulcerate and drain, followed by crusting and scabbing. These 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. In dogs, common sites are the trunk and head, and occasionally the limbs. Lesions begin as small draining wounds that eventually form nodules; these may ulcerate and leave large areas of exposed, raw tissue. Occasionally the disease can spread throughout the body and cause more severe disease and death.

Can I get sporotrichosis?

Yes. People most commonly get sporotrichosis from infection from the environment. Wounds or other minor injuries that result in broken skin (e.g., rose thorns) allow an entry site for the fungal spores (**direct contact**). Lesions are most often found 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. Other nodules may develop which eventually open or ulcerate. Healing can be very slow,

taking months to years if not treated. Rarely, sporotrichosis can affect the lungs or spread throughout the body, which 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 very difficult to prevent infections acquired from the environment. Prevent spread between animals, avoiding or isolating animals with known infection (particularly cats). Keep cats indoors to minimize interactions, especially fighting.

How can I protect myself from sporotrichosis?

Wear gloves when working in the environment, especially with rose bushes and sphagnum moss as well as hay bales, wires, conifer (pine) seedlings, and other plant materials that can puncture the skin. Long sleeved shirts and long pants can also provide protection and minimize risk. Gloves should also be worn when handling or treating affected animals, particularly cats. After removing gloves, wash your hands thoroughly and disinfect them with a solution that has antifungal activity (e.g. povidine iodine).

For More Information

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

CDC website. Sporotrichosis at http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/sporotrichosis_g.htm



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