

## Ringworm

### Dermatophytosis

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

Ringworm is a fungal skin infection that can affect humans and many animal species. The infection is also called dermatophytosis (der-mat-O-f-eye-toe-sis) and is caused by many types of fungi. The disease gets its name from the appearance of a "ring" type rash that develops on the skin of the infected person or animal. The disease has nothing to do with worms.

Some of the fungi that cause ringworm are only found on humans and very seldom found in animals. Others are found on animals and can be transferred to humans from the animals. There are also some ringworm fungi found in the soil, and under the right conditions, may affect either humans or animals.

#### What animals get ringworm?

Many species of animals can get ringworm, including dogs, cats, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, rodents, rabbits and birds.

#### How can my animal get ringworm?

The fungi that cause ringworm may live for quite some time as infective spores and **direct contact** to these spores is the cause of this condition. These spores may be on the hair of an infected animal or even on items used on the animals like brushes or clippers. Your animal could also pick up these fungi by direct contact with the soil.

#### How does ringworm affect my animal?

After exposure, it takes two to four weeks before your animal shows clinical signs. There may be areas where the hair is gone and crusts or scales may develop on the skin in the affected areas. Often the skin in these areas is red and very itchy. Sometimes the fungi causing the problem will die in the center of the affected area, leaving an appearance of a circle or ring in your animal's fur. This is where the term ringworm comes from.

#### Can I get ringworm?

Yes. You may get the infection by **direct contact** with an infected animal or from an infected person. The most common symptom is itchiness and the spots are generally most inflamed at the edge with redness, scaling, and occasionally blistering.

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

**In Animals** – Contact your veterinarian immediately.

**In Humans** – Contact your physician immediately.



**Ringworm**  
is a fungal skin disease  
that can affect many  
animal species and humans.

*Photo shows ringworm skin lesion on arm of cat and its owner.*

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

Ringworm is seen most often in animals with a poor or immature immune system. Young puppies or kittens must be kept in an area that is clean to reduce the risk of fungal infections. Infected animals should be treated and separated from other animals. Any animals with weak immune systems from other conditions (e.g. cancer, kidney disease), should be kept away from any infected animal.

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

The best way to protect yourself from ringworm is to use good hygiene habits. Wash your hands frequently, especially after contact with any animal. Clean and disinfect areas where your animal lives as well as any equipment used for the animal. Dilute chlorine bleach (1:10) may be used.

If your animal becomes infected, wear gloves and protective clothing when contacting or treating the infected animal. Wash thoroughly after contact. Vacuuming also helps. If you have a weak immune system stay away from any known infected animal or person.

#### For More Information

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

CDC website. Ringworm at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/ringworm.htm>