

## DERMATOPHYTOSIS (Ringworm)

Dermatophytosis is a fungal infection that affects the hair, skin and sometimes nails. No worms are associated with this problem. The most common fungi that cause this problem are: *Microsporum canis*, *Microsporum gypseum*, and *Trichophyton mentagrophytes*. The most common sources of these fungi are other infected pets, contaminated environment, rodents and soil. Animals can sometimes act as carriers of these fungi and have no visible lesions. This is more commonly seen in cats with *M. canis* infection. *M. canis* can also live in the environment for years and can be very difficult to remove. Visible infection in a pet may occur due to skin abrasions, lowered immune function and stress can also contribute to clinical infection.

People who come in contact with infected animals are at risk of developing lesions. As with animals, many individuals who are exposed will not develop an infection. A human dermatologist should be consulted if an infection/lesions occur in human family members.

Animals who are infected can show clinical signs such as: hair loss, broken hairs, scaling (dandruff) and darkened skin color. Signs can be subtle and mimic other diseases. Other signs can include: red bumps, itching, crusting, scaling, and occasionally pus. When nails are infected they can become brittle and deformed, then break easily or fall off.

Diagnosis of dermatophytosis is best done by fungal culture. Fungal cultures can take up to 2-4 weeks to grow. Woods light examination, and skin biopsies may need to be done in some cases to diagnose this problem. None of these tests are 100%. Diagnosis may be difficult and may sometimes take several repeated tests. Animals who are suspected carriers must be evaluated with special types of culture technique.

Treatment:

ENVIRONMENT: Treating the environment is very important. The microscopic spores can survive for years, and can serve as a source of re-infection in the future.

- Isolate or confine the affected animals
- Vacuum daily VERY carefully for 2 weeks, then twice weekly with similar diligence
- Clean all surfaces with 1:10 diluted bleach daily for 2 weeks then twice weekly
- Remove all sources of hair: ex. behind appliances and under furniture where cats may spend time

PETS: The affected pet and all contact animal should be treated. Treatment options usually include a combination of topical shampoos, dips, and oral medications. The treatment may vary on a case by case basis. All treatment should continue until 2-3 CONSECUTIVE negative cultures are obtained.