

Ringworm



Nicklin Way
VETERINARY SURGERY

Introduction

Contrary to the name, ringworm is not actually a worm; it is a fungal infection of outer layers of the skin, claws and hair. The 'classic ringworm lesion' is a rapidly expanding circular or irregular patch of inflamed, scaly skin with hair loss.

Generalised forms can occur, where there are multiple lesions all over the body. The skin is often infected with bacteria and there may be pustules and inflamed, swollen skin.

A pet can become infected with ringworm either by direct exposure with an infected animal or via the environment, such as contaminated bedding, grooming equipment, carpet and furniture, or by digging in soil in the garden. The spores are attached to the hairs, which are shed into the environment and can remain infective for up to 13 months. Ringworm is highly contagious between dogs, cats and humans. Because it is possible for humans to catch ringworm from pets and vice versa, we need to diagnose and treat early.

How is ringworm diagnosed?

- **Wood's Lamp:** A simple way to diagnose ringworm is to use an ultraviolet Wood's lamp (also known as a black light) on your pet, although only around 50% of ringworm strains will show up. The hair shafts will glow a fluorescent green when exposed to a Wood's lamp.
- **Culture:** Your veterinarian may take some samples of your pet's hair from the infected region and grow them in a lab on a special culture which enhances fungal growth. The benefit of performing a fungal culture is that the exact species of fungus can be identified. The downside is that it takes around 10 days to perform the culture.



- Direct examination of hairs under a microscope can sometimes reveal spores.
- **Biopsy:** Sometimes if the lesions are generalised and severe, or look uncharacteristic, a biopsy will be performed. This can often be done with local anaesthetic. Results are back within 2-3 days.

What are the treatments for ringworm?

Once your pet has been diagnosed with ringworm, you will have to treat both the animal, and the environment. If you live in a multiple pet household, all pets in your home will need to be treated. Carefully follow the instructions given by your veterinarian when treating your pet.

Shampoos: Malaseb shampoo contains an antifungal (miconazole). Your pet will need to be bathed weekly for 6 weeks. This not only treats the ringworm lesion, but also removes spores from the entire coat so new lesions will not form. Sometimes clipping your pet (especially longhaired pets) is recommended to increase the effectiveness of shampooing down to the skin level and also decrease environmental contamination.



Ointment: For a single lesion, an antifungal ointment is prescribed in addition to shampoos.

Griseofulvin: This is an antifungal tablet, and is usually only used when there are multiple lesions, or severe bacterial infection associated with deep fungal infection under the skin. Griseofulvin inhibits fungal cell wall division by altering the structure and function of the microtubules. This allows the pet's immune system to gain control & fight off the infection.

Decontaminating the Environment:

Vacuum daily and where possible throw out the vacuum cleaner bag. F10 veterinary disinfectant may be used to clean down surfaces, grooming equipment etc. Carpets and soft furnishings should be steam cleaned. Bedding & kennels will also need to be disinfected.

