

What is Ringworm?

It's likely that you've heard of ringworm before. You may have even had it yourself! Perhaps as a child, when it was a well-earned souvenir of a beloved summer camp. It was the little itchy spot that looked like a mosquito bite at first, until it turned into the familiar red ring we know so well.

What is ringworm? Well, it isn't a worm, that's for sure! It's a common skin fungus that affects both people and animals. Ringworm is the common name for the skin infection caused by a group of fungi; it is not caused by a worm at all. Most often it will cause a circular area of fur loss that is red and may be slightly raised. Ringworm can also have other characteristics, but these circular, hairless lesions are most common. Ringworm is similar to athlete's foot in humans.

For many cats and dogs all over the country, ringworm often means euthanasia. "Killed for a fungus?!" you might be thinking? Well, that may be the norm elsewhere, but not at SAPA! We're able to save these lives thanks to dedicated people who open their hearts and homes to them. Fostering a litter of kittens or puppies with ringworm may sound icky, but it's not! It's truly one of the BEST gifts you can give. Don't believe us? Just ask others who have done the same!



Ranelle's former foster kitten, Night, shows what a difference some TLC can make.

"We have two cats (and two human children) and are now fostering our third ringworm litter. We keep our cats away for a while, but eventually they do have contact. It's never been an issue. Those ringworm kitties are the sweetest, and you get to see them blossom as their fur fills in!" Stacey B., foster mom

"Last summer we had 4 ringworm kitties. At first we were always paranoid and checking ourselves under a blacklight, but that quickly faded. After a week or two we would usually only wash our hands upon exiting the ringworm room. Through the course of 2 months no one in our household got ringworm despite hanging out with the kitties all day. Maybe we were just lucky, but it seems to me that ringworm really isn't all that easily spread to people as long as the room is cleaned at appropriate frequency and no one is smooshing their faces into the kitties ringworm spots." Victoria Y., foster mom

Am I going to get ringworm from my new foster?

It is possible for you and anyone in your living space to get ringworm from your new kitty or puppy. Washing your hands after handling the cat can help reduce the chances of transmission, but some people may be at greater risk than others. This puts young animals and children, elderly people and pets, those who are HIV+, people on chemotherapy or taking medication after transfusion or organ transplant, and highly stressed people and animals at high risk.

What if I get ringworm!?

If you have ever had athlete's foot or jock itch, then you have already had a skin fungus like ringworm. It is easy to treat on humans (no fur). Treatment is merely applying a little anti-fungal cream, like Lamisil. Lamisil is an over the counter anti-fungal cream that can be found at any pharmacy. Apply the anti-fungal cream liberally to the infected area, a few times a day, and cover with a bandaid to keep the area clean and dry. In a few days, no more ringworm!

What about my other animals?

In order to keep your other pets from contracting ringworm, we recommend that you keep your new ringworm positive foster in an isolated room that is easy to clean, such as a bathroom.

Washing your hands and changing your clothes in between petting your ringworm kitty/pup and other animals can reduce the chance of spreading the fungus as well. Remember, your shoes can also be a carrier of the spores.

What treatment do the cats/dogs need?

Ringworm cats/dogs are treated once daily with oral medicine, called Griseofulvin (cats) and Terbinafine (dogs), and twice weekly with Lyme medical dip bath, which unfortunately is a little stinky. You will be provided with the oral medicine. If our Vet recommends, also a medicated dip, and instructions for application- everything you need to treat them for free, and we are always available to give advice and support!

What about getting ringworm my house?

If you put the cat with ringworm in a bathroom or other confined tile space, clean up is easy. Ringworm is killed by diluted bleach; a 10:1 ratio water/bleach solution works well. Apply this water/bleach solution to the surfaces your ringworm kitty has come into contact with and let it sit for approximately 15 minutes. Wipe down those surfaces. All of the ringworm foster's bedding should be washed with bleach weekly while still infected, and then once more after your new foster is cleared of ringworm to kill any possible residual spores.

We are here for you! Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions at all:

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