

## **RINGWORM**

Dermatophytosis is a fungal skin disease commonly called ringworm. The fungus lives on the skin surface in dead skin cells. As the fungus grows, it often spreads outward in a circular pattern; hence the name ringworm. Fungal infections first appear as one or more small areas of hair loss that may be reddened or inflamed. As the infection progresses, crusts form on the area of hair loss and the patches increase in number and size. In ill or immunosuppressed animals, large portions of the body may become involved. Ringworm is usually diagnosed based upon physical examination and/or fungal cultures.

The fungus that causes ringworm can be found in soil and on animals and people. Some normal appearing animals with no obvious lesions may be carriers of the disease. It is possible for your pet to acquire dermatophytosis from the soil, people, or other animals. It is also possible for your pet to pass the infection along to others. In general, children and immunocompromised individuals are most at risk of acquiring the disease from your pet. Until your pet's skin condition is improved, you should limit your skin contact with your pet and make sure to wash your hands after handling. If you or a family member develops any skin irritations while your pet is infected, please contact your physician for instructions (in most cases you will be prescribed an antifungal skin cream.)

The type of treatment used often depends upon the severity of the disease. Mild cases involving only one or two lesions may be treated with a topical lotion or cream. More severe cases require oral medication. In cats, the monthly oral flea preventative Program has been shown to help treat ringworm and prevent its reoccurrence. Local or total-body clipping and/or medicated baths may be necessary in animals with long hair. Because the ringworm organism can survive in the environment, you should vacuum up all loose hair in your home and wash your pet's bedding regularly. If you have any questions about your pet's treatment, please call the clinic.