

Ringworm

What is ringworm?

Ringworm is a fungal skin infection that is contagious to both people and animals. It is common in kittens, and cats that have been sick. Although treating ringworm can be challenging, it is a completely curable infection.



How does a cat get ringworm?

Ringworm is caused by a fungus. It releases spores that are very sturdy in the environment. Most cats come in contact with spores in the soil, but it is very contagious and can be passed from cat to cat. Usually there must be a break in the skin, like a scratch, for the fungus to create an infection, but cats with a weakened immune system, like young or ill cats, are also at risk. It takes prolonged contact and a break in the skin or a weakened immune system for a cat to pass ringworm on to a person.

How can I tell if my cat has ringworm?

A fungal culture run by your veterinarian is the best way to tell if your cat has ringworm, although caution should be taken if suspicious hair loss is seen. Ringworm causes patches of crusty hair loss, usually on the ears, face or paws of cats, but lesions can be seen anywhere. If we see any suspicious lesions at the time of surgery, FCSNP staff will let you know so you can follow up with your vet.

How do I treat ringworm?

In general, treating ringworm involves treating both the cat and the environment to remove spores and prevent reinfection. A fungal culture is needed to both diagnose the infection, and prove that it has been resolved.

Your veterinarian can help you make a treatment plan that is right for you and your pet. Dr. Newbury has produced numerous articles and videos online regarding ringworm in cat colonies. Her articles and videos are an excellent resource.

What about free-roaming and feral cats?

Treating these cats may not be possible; however, knowing about an infection within a colony can help caregivers to prevent the spread of infection by alerting them to the need for isolation from other sites and using gloves when handling. So long as the colony is stable, neutered, vaccinated, and well cared for, the infection is likely to go away on its own.

How can FCSNP help?

FCSNP uses strict disinfection and disease prevention guidelines to prevent any spread of infectious disease. We will notify caregivers at pickup if hair loss suspicious of ringworm are seen at the time of surgery. Please follow up with your regular veterinarian to evaluate the need for a fungal culture and possible treatment.

