



RINGWORM

Ringworm refers to **infections** of the skin, hairs or nails by **fungal** organisms (so have nothing directly to do with worms). The technical term for a ringworm infection is **dermatophytosis**.

The fungal organisms that cause ringworm **normally reside in soil** and can infect many animals including people. Cats can become infected from soil, infected living quarters or other animals (including people). Likewise, people can become infected from soil or cats. It's **not always the cat's fault** when people get ringworm!

All infections are associated with how the immune responds when the germ is present and ringworm is no different. Therefore, it is **usually young cats** or older (immune suppressed) cats who become infected. In the same way, it is usually children who are infected in a family situation but stress can play a role to decrease the immune response. Persians and other long-haired cats also seem more likely to become infected.

The typical signs are **circular hair loss** and each area will grow outwards if not treated. These areas are not usually itchy in cats (compared to people who are usually itchy with ringworm). The diagnosis is confirmed by a typical **glow of infected hair under fluorescent light** (but not with all types of ringworm) and/or a **fungal culture**.

Treatment is with tablets or twice weekly washes with a medicated shampoo (or both). The most common sort of tablets, **griseofulvin**, are dangerous if ingested by **pregnant women** (or pregnant cats) so we will always discuss **who will be medicating the cat** when we dispense this. Other side effects for the cat also sometimes occur. There are other, newer medications (that are considerably more expensive). Treatment must continue beyond when the lesions look healed to ensure the infection is fully cleared. **Most cats' ringworm will resolve with a 3-4 week course** but some cats are challenging to successfully treat and require multiple concurrent therapies.