

# DEALING WITH RINGWORM

By: Youngest Old Cat Lady

## **Please note:**

- Ringworm is NOT a worm. It is a fungus. So don't panic- worms aren't infesting your house!
- The fungus eats keratin- a protein found in skin, hair and nails.

## **Diagnosing:**

- Ringworm first usually appears as hair loss in small patches. This is usually accompanied by small white crusty, flaky, red skin.
- It usually first appears near the ears, head, forelimbs and tail.
- Kittens, pregnant cats and geriatric cats are more susceptible to get the fungus. Think of what type of people have weak immune symptoms- it's the same for cats.
- Some cats show no signs of ringworm but can still test positive. Now you are all terrified your cat has ringworm, calm down, they probably don't. Probably.
- I use a woods lamp when I suspect ringworm. You can also use an ultraviolet flashlight to look at the suspected spot. Ringworm has a distinct glow on the hair follicles and skin when infected. If it glowing at all- please see a vet. There are things that glow that are NOT ringworm. I was almost positive #theDonutKittens had ringworm because their spots of hair loss glowed but in fact it turned out to be a bacterial infection.
- To confirm your kitten or cat has ringworm, contact your vet to get a culture test done on the hair follicles. It is common for this test to take two weeks for results. If positive, you will continue to get new culture tests done every two weeks until you have two negative test results back.

## **What if I get ringworm?**

Do not panic! Ringworm in people is itchy, but very easily treated. Cover it with a bandage and see your doctor if you are concerned. Usually all natural Tea Tree Oil is an easy remedy.

## **Treatment:**

- Treatment usually takes anywhere between 2-4 months. It really depends on your cats immune system.
- Preferably, keep your cat in an easy to clean space like a bathroom.
- Twice weekly: bath your kitten/cat with an anti fungal shampoo. If your shelter requires you to use Lime Dips, ask if you are allowed to try a shampoo as they are gentler on the skin. I recommend *Lively Pet Derma-Smoother Medicated Moisturizing Shampoo*. Bath according to instructions. Make sure to keep the cat warm afterwards. Especially with kittens, make sure they have a heating disc to help them dry quickly.
- Daily: Your veterinarian should prescribe an oral medication to be given daily. There are both pill and liquid forms. Some have harsher side effects than others. Please discuss with your vet which medication is best suited for your pet and if you notice

side effects, stop the medication until you can speak with your vet about how to proceed.

- Between baths: I recommend using topical ointments in-between baths to get rid of the ringworm as soon as possible. The product *Nu-stock* is used to treat ringworm in all animals and is safe to use on kittens. You can usually get this on Amazon or at a local feed store. Another option, or addition, is *Vetericyn Antimicrobial Hydrogel*. This is especially nice if you are required to do Lime Sulfur Dips as it re-moisturizes the skin while helping relieve itching and treating the infection.

### **Cleaning:**

- There are different opinions on the depths of how deep you need to clean your house for ringworm contamination. Ringworm produces millions of microscopic spores that contaminate wherever your animal has been. That being said, I clean like I want to be able to lick the floor. This is also because I foster so much. You can not over clean. On the other hand, there are homes that do not foster, and do not want to keep their own cats locked away in a bleach-able area for months (understandably). If you are not going to keep your pet in a locked in area, I recommend vacuuming three times a week and using *Rescue Spray* on the most used areas- carpets, couches, cat trees, etc. at the same time.
- I do NOT vacuum daily in the contaminated areas as vacuuming can cause the fungus to get kicked back up in the air. Because I have a bleach-able space, after each bath, I spray the entire floor where the animals are with *Rescue Spray*. *Rescue Spray* is a deodorizer and disinfectant. It will kill fungus in 5 minutes as well as a lot of other pathogens. Spray the floor, couches, and any other non washable items and leave on for at least 5 minutes. You can then wipe them down with a paper towel, though it is safe to leave on.
- When you are using the *Rescue Spray* it is preferable the cats are not in the room. This is why I set up a bathing area (usually in my garage or laundry room), put the cats in a crate while I spray the room, and then do the baths so that when I return with the cats to the room the strong smell is gone. It also helps to open the windows!
- Make sure to wash all the blankets/beds they have been using. I also dump the litter boxes (as ringworm is often on the paws) and either bleach them OR use disposable litter boxes to make things easier. Only put enough litter to last till the next bath. Any toys that can not be thrown in the washer with the blankets should be sprayed with *Rescue Spray*. If it is a cardboard scratcher, it should be thrown out. I usually make them fun toys that are easy to throw out or clean every few days- a favorite is just a cardboard box with ping pong balls in it. You can throw the ping pong balls in the sink with bleach and throw away the box and replace it after the next bath.
- I replace their water daily and the food dish after each bath.
- Dishes and toys can be cleaned in a 1:10 bleach ratio solution.
- Laundry should be washed with color-safe (if needed) bleach.
- If you do not use *Rescue Spray* to clean the floors, you can also use the 1:10 bleach solution. (1 part bleach to 10 parts water). The floor should stay wet with bleach for 10 minutes to kill any ringworm spores. Bleach will not clean the floor in the presence of dirt, so make sure your floor is clean of litter, spilled food, dirt, etc. before using the bleach to clean.

### **Interacting with your cat:**

- Shelters often recommend using gloves when coming in contact with a cat with ringworm. Please use your own judgement on this issue. I do not use gloves, but make sure to always wash my hands and arms thoroughly after playing with the kittens.
- It is recommended to change clothing after interacting with your ringworm cats. Usually when I go into the room, I have a pair of shoes set aside to wear just in that room. When I leave the room, I remove the shoes, keeping them in the room, and then remove my socks and throw them in the wash. You can spray the bottom of your shoes with Rescue Spray as well when coming and going to really make sure you are not tracking the spores out with you.
- Change your clothing if you have been holding the cats or cleaning as the spores may have become air-borne and contaminated your clothing. If I am going to be cuddling kittens with ringworm, I have a sweatshirt just for that room I will put on when I go in. Then every time I give the cats their baths and wash their blankets, I also wash the sweatshirt/sweatpants I wore in the room.
- The best time I find to spend with the cats is before I am going to shower. It is easy when fostering kittens with ringworm, to stay away from the room because you fear getting ringworm yourself, but they still need socialization. I recommend setting aside an hour before you are going to shower to go in and play, snuggle and give attention to each cat before showering.
- Even when you believe your cat is ringworm free, if you have not gone to the vet to get ringworm cultures, I recommend continuing the sterilization process for 2-4 weeks to make sure any hair follicles that you may not have seen symptoms on, are now de-contaminated.

### **De-contaminating your home after your cat is ringworm free:**

- Throw away any items that can not be completely sterilized- scratching posts, cat trees, toys, etc. I would rather have to buy a few new items than start the whole process over again with my own cats or future foster cats.
- Re-spray the flooring with Rescue Spray or Bleach at least twice.
- Replace any air filters you have been using in the contaminated room.
- Vacuum the whole house daily for one week, also cleaning the vacuum bag each day.
- Get your carpets professional cleaned if the infected cats have been in contact at all. Home steam cleaners unfortunately do not heat up to the temperature needed to kill fungus.

### **How to prevent ringworm contaminating your home while fostering:**

- When new kittens or cats arrive, inspect each cat thoroughly for hair loss patches and scabby skin.
- Have your new fosters in a separate space from your own animals for at least two weeks, so if any symptoms were to arise, they have not been exposed.
- Wash your hands before and after interacting with your new foster kittens. This is not only for you and your pets safety, but also for your foster cats.
- Every few days, look over each cat again for spots losing hair.

## **DO NOT PANIC:**

- Does Ringworm suck? YES! But, I will say once you get a routine down it will take you far less time.
- I estimate every 3 days it would take me 2-3 hours to collect all the washable items, throw them in the laundry room, spray the room, bathe the cats, and put new clean items in the room. I usually go into the contaminated room with 2 garbage bags- one for disposable litter boxes/litter, and one to put the washable blankets and toys in to carry to the laundry room. Once you have done it 2 or 3 times, you will find your own routine and you won't feel as panicked.
- Ringworm does go away on its own but if you are fostering or plan to foster, it is extremely important to clean your home and help treat your foster animals so they can heal as quickly as possible.
- If you do not have other pets, and would consider being a ringworm foster parent only (we have a friend that does this and loves it) you will be helping some of the most vulnerable populations in shelters.
- If your foster kittens got ringworm, it does not mean all future foster cats have it as well! Trust me, I have literally had nightmares of my cats getting it. Wait at least two weeks after your finale sterilization of your home to start fostering a new group.
- And remember, it's not the end of the world! Yes, it may take a little extra work, but you really will find a routine (I repeat this so much because I want you to get it through your head!). It is SO worth all the work when you see happy healthy foster kittens/cat, or your own cats, feeling better.

## **Items mentioned above for treatment:**

All items can be found on my Amazon Recommendation's Ideas List. Go to my website, [youngestoldcatlady.com](http://youngestoldcatlady.com) and click on Recommendations. Visit the "Medical Items" list to see the mentioned items:

**Lively Pet Advanced Plus:** Medicated Moisturizing Shampoo. Ketoconazole and Chlorhexidine for Dry Skin, Yeast Infections, Dandruff & Mites.

**Nu-Stock (Durvet) Ointment:** For Use On Animals. I use a Q-tip to get the material out of the bottle after shaking it, as it is rather liquidy and easily leaks from the bottle.

**Vetericyn Plus Hydrogel:** Antimicrobial Hydrogel. You can use this as often as you want on the infected areas. This is also great for cuts, wounds, sensitive skin and allergies.

**Rescue Spray:** I recommend buying the Concentrate Bottle as it will be much more cost effective to mix your own rather than buy bottles of already made solution. Name: Rescue One-Step Disinfectant Cleaner & Deodorizer, Concentrate Bottle (1 Gallon)

Disclaimer: I am NOT a veterinarian. This is my take on how to deal with Ringworm & not a professional opinion. Please consult your veterinarian with any questions.