

RINGWORM

“Ringworm” is a skin disease of warm-blooded mammals properly termed **“Dermatomycosis.”** It can be a major problem in multiple animal households and kennels/catteries. **It is caused by a fungus-type organism. It is NOT a “worm!”**

The fungus lives in the outer layers of skin, hair shafts, and toe nails. It invades the hair follicles damaging the actual hair itself. The hairs become fragile and break easily. As the infection progresses, more and more hair may be lost.

After appropriate treatment, the hair will grow back though sometimes discolored. Ringworm may result in secondary bacterial infections of the skin causing destruction of the hair follicles-so that hair may not grow back. It is important to initiate treatment early.

Dogs and cats become infected with the fungus by contact with other infected animals, infected people, or contaminated soil.

Diagnosis is made by specific tests including skin scrapings, ultraviolet light observation, fungal cultures, and sometimes biopsy.

Ringworm is contagious to people. In fact, the disease “Athlete’s Foot” is a form of ringworm very common in people.

It is important that we culture suspected cases of ringworm to determine the specific fungus due to the possibility of family members and/or other pets contracting the infection.