

Ringworm in Dogs

Despite its name, ringworm is not a worm but a fungus, similar to athlete's foot. It's an infection that can affect both animals and humans, and it can be quite contagious. Here's what you need to know about ringworm in dogs.

What is Ringworm?

Ringworm is a fungal infection that affects the skin, causing infective 'seeds' known as spores. These spores are hardy and can survive in the environment for a long time, sometimes years. Ringworm spores only infect through broken skin, so a dog with healthy skin is less likely to contract the infection.



Symptoms of Ringworm in Dogs

Ringworm in dogs typically presents as patches of hair loss with a crusty covering. The appearance can vary, with some dogs showing grey, scaly patches, while others might have red lesions. Common symptoms include:

- Hair loss, often in circular patches
- Broken or brittle hair
- Crusty skin or scaling
- Lesions, especially on the paws, legs, head, or ears

However, many other skin conditions look similar to ringworm, so it's essential to get a proper diagnosis.

Who is at Risk?

- **Young, elderly, or long-haired dogs** are more likely to be affected.
- **People with weakened immune systems, children, and the elderly** are more at risk of catching ringworm from infected dogs.

Diagnosing Ringworm in Dogs

If you suspect your dog has ringworm, it's important to visit your vet. They may use:

- **Ultraviolet (UV) light:** Some types of ringworm fluoresce under UV light.
- **Microscopic examination:** A sample of your dog's fur can be examined to identify the fungus.
- **Lab cultures:** The most reliable method, though it takes up to 10 days to get results.

Treatment for Ringworm in Dogs



Once diagnosed, your vet will prescribe a treatment plan, which could include:

- **Oral anti-fungal medication** to stop the ringworm from reproducing.
- **Topical treatments**, such as medicated shampoos or lotions, to apply directly to your dog's skin.

In some cases, a combination of both oral and topical treatments may be needed.

Can You Get Ringworm from Your Dog?

Yes, ringworm is contagious and can be passed from dogs to humans, especially if there is broken skin. People with conditions like eczema, or those with weaker immune systems (e.g., young children, the elderly, or those undergoing chemotherapy), are more at risk. In humans, ringworm appears as a red, circular patch on the skin.

When treating your dog, wear gloves and avoid touching your dog if you have cuts or scratches. Some anti-fungal medications for dogs should not be handled by pregnant women, so always follow your vet's advice.

Preventing the Spread of Ringworm

To prevent ringworm from spreading, restrict your infected dog to one room and clean thoroughly:

- **Vacuum frequently** and empty the vacuum bag immediately.
- **Steam clean carpets** and use disinfectant on surfaces (ask your vet for recommended disinfectants).
- Wash bedding and toys, and consider discarding items that can't be



cleaned properly.

Key Takeaways

- Ringworm is a fungal infection that affects dogs and can be passed to humans.

- If you suspect your dog has ringworm, seek veterinary advice for diagnosis and treatment.
- Isolate your dog during treatment and clean their environment thoroughly to prevent the infection from spreading or recurring.

With proper treatment and environmental cleaning, ringworm can be managed effectively in both dogs and humans.