

# Ringworm Info for Foster Carers



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## What is ringworm?

Despite the name, ringworm has nothing to do with worms. Ringworm is a fungus which lives on the skin, hair shaft and hair follicles of an animal or human and causes scabby, hair loss lesions. Whilst not serious or life-threatening, ringworm can be annoying to treat and can stay in the environment for a long time if you're not careful.

## If I foster an animal, will the animal have ringworm?

The short answer is 'probably not' but there is a small possibility that it might. Ringworm affects a small percentage of kittens and very occasionally adult cats. In some extremely rare cases, a dog may have it. There is a possibility that a kitten may come into care with no clinical signs of ringworm and then develop ringworm a week or two later. This is because the incubation period for ringworm can be up to 21 [but usually 4-14] days.

Due to this, we highly recommend that any new kitten that goes to a foster home is kept in quarantine for about 2 weeks in a room with hard floors (so it is easier to disinfect).

## Do AWL NSW test for ringworm?

**Kemps Creek Foster Carers:** Shortly after a cat or kittens arrive at the Kemps Creek shelter, they are given a health check by an AWL NSW veterinarian. If they appear to have visible signs of ringworm, a sample of the kittens fur is taken and put on a culture plate. It takes up to 2 weeks for the culture to grow and our vet staff reads the results which will be 'positive' for ringworm or 'negative' (no ringworm detected). Cultures are one of the most accurate ways to detect ringworm.

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Another way to detect ringworm is by using a Wood's lamp but it isn't always very accurate. A Wood's lamp is a special ultraviolet light that you can shine on a cat/kitten in the dark and if patches of fur [loss] light up yellow-green at the hair follicle, it may have ringworm. Only about 50% of ringworm glows and there is a possibility for false-positives using this method.

**AWL NSW Branch Foster Carers:** If you notice fur loss on your foster animal, contact your Welfare Officer for assistance with diagnosing what may be causing the hair loss.

Ringworm generally affects the face, ears, paws, head and/or tail but could be anywhere on the body. If the fur loss is on the lower-back, it is more likely to be a flea allergy or fur loss from overgrooming.

*If you notice fur loss on your foster animal, contact the AWL NSW Vet Clinic (Kemps Creek carers) or the Welfare Officer for your branch if you are fostering for an AWL NSW branch.*

## Zoonosis

Ringworm is highly contagious and can spread to other animals and people. For this reason it is recommended that you wear gloves while handling kittens if he/she has ringworm (or has been in care for less than 14 days) and keep the kitten confined to a small area of the house, with hard floors. It is best to avoid cuddling ringworm-infected animals as the ringworm spores can go on your clothing and then spread to other animals or people.

If you contract ringworm, see your doctor for treatment.

You must keep ringworm animals separate from other animals for the duration of treatment.

## Ringworm Treatment

The treatment for ringworm varies between vets and individual animals. At AWL NSW Kemps Creek, it generally involves giving the animal a daily oral medication (given with food) and twice weekly baths in a medicated shampoo for 4 weeks. Sometimes a topical cream may also be provided for the treatment.

### Oral Medication

Oral medication is given once daily with food until there are two consecutive negative cultures. This can be in the form of a liquid (sporonox) or tablet (terbinafine) depending on the size of the animal. Oral medication is absorbed when given with food.

### Topical Medication

Lamisil (terbinafine) cream or Fungafit is a topical treatment that is applied once daily for 3 weeks. This medication kills spores and prevents them from reaching the environment. Therefore it should be applied and rubbed thoroughly into the skin area.

### Baths

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Maleseb is a medicated shampoo that is done twice weekly for 4 weeks. For the bathing process, you will need to thoroughly wet the animal with warm water, apply the maleseb wash and rub the kitten until they are completely covered (be careful not to get any liquid in the kittens eyes or mouth) and then leave this to sit on the kitten for 10 minutes in a carrier. After 10 minutes rinse the animal with warm water. It can be best to have an e-collar on the kitten during this time to prevent them from licking off any of the shampoo.

Once the kitten is rinsed off, be sure to dry the kitten well. It is also a good idea to give the kitten a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel after a bath to keep them warm.

***A maleseb bath should not be done within 48 hours of a ringworm culture being taken.***

## How long does ringworm stay in the environment?

Ringworm spores can live for up to about 18 months in the right environment which is why it is important to decontaminate properly and regularly.

## Decontamination

Due to the fact that ringworm is a very resistant fungus, there are only a handful of ways to eradicate it from the environment. The use of diluted F10 solution should ideally be used for decontamination but bleach can also be used in ratio of 1:10 as per [this guide](#). This can be provided to you in a small bottle from the vet clinic if you are a foster carer for AWL NSW Kemp's Creek.

F10 when diluted to a 1:125 ratio (1ml of F10 mixed with 125mls of water) will kill any ringworm spores after 30 minutes of contact time. Make this dilution in a spray bottle and spray onto the surface of everything the animal come in contact with and leave for 30 minutes to air dry. This includes: all bedding, scratching posts, litter trays, food and water bowls, toys, crates, floors, etc.

***Do not, under any circumstances, use undiluted F10 for any reason. It is not effective and can cause severe health problems for you and the kittens.***

**If you are using F10 or bleach on food/water bowls and litter trays, these items need to be rinsed very well with water before allowing the kittens to use again.**

It is also recommended that rather than trying to decontaminate anything that is made from fabric, that you simply throw it out and replace such items when you clean. Ideally the only fabric you will have with the kittens is bedding (towels, blankets etc). Cardboards boxes can also be used, however they will need to be thrown out with every clean as the F10 will not effectively clean such items.

Clean the environment every time you give the kittens a maleseb bath to ensure that the freshly bathed kittens are not going back into a contaminated environment.

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Also be sure to spray out any carriers you use for the kittens, as well as any door handles that you touch after touching the kittens.

## Ringworm Cultures (Ringworm test – for Kemps Creek carers only)

Once the cat/kitten has been treated for 2 weeks, they can come in to the vet clinic for a culture. This should be done every 7-10 days. Please call the vet clinic to make the appointment and let them know that the kittens are undergoing ringworm treatment.

The vet will take a sample of the fur and put it on a culture plate. The results can take up to 2 weeks. During this time it is important that you are continuing with your kittens' treatment as well as regular cleaning of the environment.

Once the animal has two consecutive negative cultures, they are deemed ringworm-free and can come back to the shelter for desexing and adoption as per the normal process.

If the environment that the kittens are in is not being cleaned effectively, this can cause the kittens to continually re-infect themselves. For this reason, we strongly recommend decontaminating the environment very regularly.

## How long does it take to get rid of ringworm in an infected cat/kitten?

It can take a minimum of 4+ weeks in care for cats/kittens to be given the all clear for ringworm. However depending on how quickly the ringworm is diagnosed and how well the kittens respond to medication, this time could be shorter or longer.

## Home remedies

While the internet is a fantastic resource for information, there is quite a lot of incorrect information on there in regards to treating ringworm. Items such as eucalyptus oil, tea tree oil, apple cider vinegar or oil of any kind can often be suggested to treat ringworm. This is completely untrue and could harm and be toxic to the animal.

For this reason we insist that you use only the medications and supplies that we provide to treat the animal(s) for ringworm.