

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Ringworm?

Ringworm is the common name a skin infection caused by a fungus; it is not a worm at all! Most often it presents as an area of fur loss that can be flakey or red. Ringworm can have other characteristics but circular, hairless, or crusty lesions are most common. It is possible for you and anyone in your living space to get ringworm from your foster cat(s), but people who are very young, elderly or immunocompromised are more likely to get it. Ringworm is also contagious to other animals, (especially if they are immunocompromised). Practicing good hygiene and washing your hands after handling the infected animals greatly reduces the chance of transmission to you, your family and any animals in your house.

What if I get ringworm!?

If you have ever had athlete's foot or jock itch, then you have already had a skin fungus like ringworm. Thankfully, it is usually easy to treat on humans! Treatment is generally applying an anti-fungal cream like Lamisil- an over the counter cream that can be found at any pharmacy. Apply the cream to the infected area according to instructions (usually twice daily for 10-14 days). You should keep the area covered when handling animals in your home (foster or personal) to avoid infecting them, as you can pass ringworm to them as easily as they can pass it to you!

What about my other animals?

In order to keep your other pets from contracting ringworm, you should keep your fosters in an isolated room that is easy to clean, such as a bathroom. Washing your hands and changing your clothes in between petting your ringworm kitty and other animals can reduce the chance of spreading the fungus as well. Remember, things like your hair and shoes can also be a carrier!

What treatment do the foster cats need?

Ringworm cats are treated twice weekly with a lime sulfur bath, which unfortunately is a little stinky. The length of treatments needed will be dependent on the degree of infection, but even if you are only able to commit to a couple of weeks, it is very helpful!! You will be provided the medicated dip, gloves, and instructions for treating the kitties - everything you need to treat them for free- and we are always available to give advice and support! We also often treat ringworm with an oral medication called itrafungol- if your foster is prescribed this medication you'll give it once a day for 21 days.

What about getting ringworm my house?

Keeping cats with ringworm in a bathroom or other confined, tiled space makes clean-up easy! Ringworm can easily be killed by cleaning first, then using a diluted bleach solution (or a product we can provide called RESCUE) to disinfect. Step by step instructions and cleaner (if necessary) will be provided to you to ensure that your foster areas are staying appropriately disinfected during your ringworm kitties' stay. We'll also provide you with instructions to disinfect after your ringworm fosters are cleared so you can have other non-ringworm fosters in the future!

Instructions for Lime Sulfur Dips

Dip animals twice per week. Try to schedule “dip days” and space them out evenly. For example, dipping your fosters every Tuesday and Friday.

Using a small plastic tub or large plastic litterbox in a bathtub is probably the easiest and least messy way to dip your fosters- we will provide one!

We send home concentrated sulfur-lyme dip, so you'll need to dilute it before dipping your fosters. **The correct dilution is 8 oz of dip to 1 gallon of warm water.** If you are fostering smaller kittens, you can adjust the amount of dip that you add proportionally (i.e. 4oz of dip per ½ gallon of water).

You should add the lime sulfur to the dip tub **FIRST**, then add the water. Use warm (not too hot) water to dilute the dip. Bathe each animal thoroughly in the dip paying attention to any hairless or flakey spots. Make sure that the fur is coated well and the dip soaks down to the skin. Use a washcloth to carefully apply the dip to the cat's face. When bathing be careful to avoid the cats' eyes. If a little of the dip accidentally gets into their mouths or ears it is okay. However, if it gets into their eyes it will burn and the eye will need to be flushed thoroughly with eye wash clean water.

DO NOT RINSE THE DIP OFF! It is important to let them air dry. You can blot them with a towel a bit to avoid dripping, but you want the dip to remain on the animal.

The yellow color is only temporary and will not stain their fur forever. If you are dipping small/young kittens it is important to keep them warm while they dry! You can do this by wrapping them in a towel and holding them until their fur dries.

The AHS Foster Coordinator will schedule appointments with you to bring your kitties in for ringworm rechecks during this process- don't give a lyme-sulfur dip for 24 hours before your appointment.

Important tips for dipping: Remove any jewelry prior to dipping as lime sulfur dip can discolor silver. We will provide gloves you can use when dipping to avoid your hands smelling like lime sulfur dip or becoming yellow tinted- but they can sometimes rip if a claw catches them. Inexpensive but thicker latex dish gloves from the dollar store are also great to use. If you do come into contact with the dip, don't worry!! While it may be unpleasant, it is safe and the smell/color is only temporary!

“Scruffing” the cat can be helpful to restrain the cat while dipping if they get wiggly. This will not hurt them. AHS staff can show you this technique if you like!

Small sponges or makeup sponges can be used around the face to ensure the sulfur-lyme dip is getting everywhere!

Areas occupied by ringworm infected foster cats should be cleaned and disinfected weekly. Bedding and toys should also be washed and dried regularly using normal laundry detergent and bleach. Ongoing cleaning will prevent re-infection of the cats in your care while also minimizing any chance of transmission. This will help protect you, your animals and future foster animals.

The difference between cleaning and disinfecting:

- **Cleaning** breaks up actual dirt or organic matter. It is the physical removal of dirt and debris. This includes washing bowls, litter boxes or other items with dish soap or other household cleaner, sweeping or vacuuming floors, or wiping away urine or feces. Cleaning is typically done on a daily basis!
- **Disinfecting** uses a chemical solution to kill or inactivate germs. The type of germs killed is dependent on the solution and requires a specific contact time in order to be effective. Contact time is the amount of time that the surface must remain visibly wet in order to kill the germs.
 - o The most inexpensive, readily available and effective disinfecting product is bleach, which kills most common pathogens, including ringworm.
 - o AHS will provide another disinfectant (Rescue) which is generally color safe (but we always recommend a test area).

Two-step process to clean and disinfect foster areas:

Step 1:

- Clean all areas (wipe down hard surfaces, sweep/mop hardwood floors, vacuum carpets/rugs, etc.) with a common household cleaner.
- Make sure all dirt and debris has been thoroughly mopped, wiped, vacuumed or swept away.

Step 2:

Option 1: Using RESCUE and water solution diluted 1:16 (8 oz Rescue concentrate per gallon of water), wipe down hard surfaces, mop floors, and spray any carpet or fabric. Make sure that all surfaces remain visibly wet for 10 minutes. This will ensure that any remaining ringworm spores are killed.

RESCUE SHOULD NEVER BE MIXED WITH BLEACH OR OTHER CLEANING PRODUCTS

Rescue is non-toxic, and generally color-safe, but we always recommend a test area to be safe.

Option 2: Using a bleach and water solution diluted at 1:10 (1 part bleach, 10 parts water), wipe down hard surfaces and mop floors. Make sure that all surfaces remain visibly wet for 10 minutes.

- Remember to wipe down hard surfaces after ten minutes to remove any residual bleach as it may be harmful to animals.

Note: Once mixed, the bleach/water solution is only effective for 24 hours and must be protected from light.

Soft toys, scratching posts, carpeted cat trees, and bedding should ideally be discarded if they have been exposed to ringworm to prevent future animals from getting infected. Any items that you need to keep need to be thoroughly cleaned with the two-step process outlined above, and bedding can be laundered using regular detergent and bleach at the 1:32 dilution in your washing machine. Once your ringworm foster returns, we ask that you repeat this disinfecting process with bleach or Rescue 3 times total before bringing any new foster animals into the home.

