

Ringworm Recognition & Sanitation

PURPOSE

This document defines the policy and procedures for recognizing ringworm & how to sanitize once you have identified it.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all ringworm program staff and volunteers responsible for recognizing ringworm in cats and sanitizing cattery spaces exposed to ringworm.

POLICY

APA! ringworm program staff and volunteers will inspect cats for ringworm and sanitize cattery spaces exposed to ringworm in accordance with the documented procedures.

PROCEDURES

Checking for signs of ringworm

1. Ringworm most often presents itself as circular lesions (areas of hair loss) with clearly defined edges:



2. The skin is often crusty and scaly, or tough and leathery looking, and the fur surrounding the lesion may appear broken or damaged:



3. Ringworm is often seen on the tail, ears, and paws, although it can infect a cat anywhere on its body:



4. A Wood's Lamp can be used to help check for ringworm. An infected area will glow green down the entire hair shaft under a blacklight. Lesions will often be stippled with bright green spots that do not wash or wipe away. Keep in mind that not all strains of ringworm will fluoresce, and other things, such as urine or mucus, will.
5. If ringworm is suspected in a cat offsite, notify management immediately. Ringworm is very contagious, and allowing a suspected ringworm cat to remain in cattery is increasing the risk of an outbreak.
6. The cat should be immediately quarantined from others, and not allowed out to roam. The cat will need to be seen by the clinic to confirm or deny ringworm and in the meantime, the cat should be handled as though it is infected.
7. If a cat has been removed from your cattery due to ringworm, it is extremely important that you thoroughly clean and disinfect the cat's enclosure as soon as possible.
8. Ringworm is very contagious, and the spores are very hardy, living for years in an environment if not properly sanitized. One infected cat can quickly become an entire cattery full if the following procedures are not carefully followed.

Pre-sanitation

1. Consider the following:
 - a. Ringworm spores can be carried through debris in the air. Even if a cat has not come into direct contact with an area (for instance, five feet up a wall,) it can still house spores, and must be carefully cleaned.
 - b. Bleach solution should be made at a ratio of 10 parts water to one part bleach. Diluted bleach does not remain effective for longer than a day, and should be remade for every cleaning.
 - c. Remember that after close contact with a ringworm exposed environment, hands and clothes may carry spores. Try to clean after dealing with the rest of the cats, in order to avoid spreading infection. Also remember that cleaning implements, such as brooms and dustpans, should be washed and bleached after cleaning a ringworm exposed enclosure.
 - d. Sanitizing after a ringworm cat should be taken seriously, and done thoroughly. While the infection itself is harmless, there are not many places for cats with ringworm to go within APA! When cats already in the cat program contract ringworm, they occupy space that could be used for ringworm cats whose lives are at risk.

Sanitizing single condo enclosures

Once the infected cat has been moved from the condo, no new cats should be moved in until the condo is sanitized.

1. Remove everything from the enclosure. Throw away any disposable items, like cardboard scratchers and toys. Place all soft, washable items, including bedding, into a plastic bag to be laundered separately with bleach.

2. All nonlaundryable items should be washed, then completely saturated in 10:1 bleach solution. Let the solution sit on the surface for a minimum of 10 minutes to ensure proper disinfection.
3. The condo itself should be vacuumed out if possible. If not, use a bleach solution soaked rag to wipe out litter and other debris. Using a hand broom will not only transfer spores to the broom, but can also kick them up into the air and spread them around the cattery.
4. Scrub out the enclosure with a detergent.
5. Saturate the entire condo in bleach solution. Remember ceilings, corners, cutaways between cubes, etc. Let the solution air dry, or sit for a minimum of 10 minutes.
6. Wash with detergent, then saturate the entire condo in bleach solution again.
7. If possible, wash and bleach it down one more time. Three bleachings is ideal, although not always realistic. However, a condo should not be considered sanitized until it has been washed and bleached twice.
8. Clean bedding, bowls and litterboxes, and new toys can now be added. Do not put a cat in the condo until all of the bleach is dry, and the fumes are gone.

Sanitizing multiple cat enclosures

No new cats should be moved into the enclosure until it has been sanitized (bleached at least twice). No cats in ringworm exposed enclosures should be moved to new group rooms until after 14 days.

1. Remove all cats from the enclosure before washing and sanitizing.
2. Remove everything from the enclosure. Throw away any disposable items, like cardboard scratchers and small toys. Place all soft, washable items into a plastic bag to be laundered separately with bleach.
3. All removable, nonlaundryable items should be washed, then completely saturated in 10:1 bleach solution. Let the solution sit on the surface for a minimum of 10 minutes to ensure proper disinfection.
4. All nonremovable items, such as large cat trees, should be wiped down with a bleach solution soaked rag to remove any loose hairs or debris that may be holding spores.
5. If vacuuming is not an option, try tying a bleach solution soaked rag over the end of a broom, and using it to sweep the floors. This will prevent them from being sent airborne.
6. Wash the entire enclosure with a detergent. Use a spray bottle to saturate the entire enclosure, and everything left in it, with bleach solution. Be as thorough as possible – walls, doors, cat trees, floor, etc.
7. Let the solution air dry, or sit for a minimum of 10 minutes.
8. If at all possible, repeat the washing and bleaching process immediately after the first round. If it is not possible, return the cats to the enclosure after all of the bleach is dry, and inform all other counselors working that site that the bleaching process needs to be done once more before the enclosure is considered clean and new cats can move in. Again, three bleachings is ideal, but two is necessary.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For questions regarding this policy or the ringworm ward, contact ringworm@austinpetsalive.org.