

## BE A PART OF THE FUNGAL FIGHTERS CREW!

**WE NEED YOU!**

**YES YOU!**

**To help us fight this fungal virus....**

**RINGWORM!**

### **What exactly is Ringworm? Sounds gross...**

Ringworm is a fungal infection surrounding the skin, hair, and occasionally the nails of animals (and people). It manifests itself on animals generally on the head, around the eyes, ears, feet, and tail, though can happen anywhere on the body. It creates areas of hair loss that are rough and scaly. It is not as scary as it may sound. If you were to search ringworm on the internet, you'll find lots of dramatic pictures and clinical information that makes it sound very difficult to deal with; however, it is not as hard to handle as it sounds, and the Foster team is here to help support you every step of the way! With proper care and sanitization, this fungus can be easily contained to ensure that you and the other animals that share your home stay fungus-free.

Ringworm is caused by a group of fungi called dermatophytes that feed on keratin found in skin, hair, and nail tissue. In some cases, the lesions are very difficult to notice, sometimes with just a few missing hairs. Fortunately, it is completely and easily treatable and animals can make a full recovery with care.

Despite its name, it is NOT a worm! It's very closely related to Athlete's foot found commonly in humans. While it is a zoonotic infection - meaning it can be passed between species - it most commonly affects young animals and those with suppressed immune systems.

### **How is ringworm treated?**

Ringworm is fairly easy to treat. Treatment consists of an oral medication (we use Itrafungol) that is given once daily for 7 days every other week for 5 weeks. During that time, the animals also receive two specially medicated baths per week throughout the entire course of treatment. These are like sponge baths that treat the lesions found on the body. Throughout the course of treatment, we send out PCR tests to Antech to retest for the ringworm at the designated time periods. Once we have two negative tests in a row, they can officially be called Ringworm negative!

While ringworm is not lethal in and of itself, it can be a death sentence for animals in some shelters around the country just because of how highly contagious it is in a shelter setting. This can become costly to a shelter. HSWM strongly believes each animal deserves a chance to be saved, especially with something as treatable as ringworm. By dedicating a few weeks of your time to helping animals through the healing process, you'll be saving their lives as well.

### **What does a foster home need to prepare in order to treat animals with ringworm?**

- The foster animals must be kept in a space in your home that can be completely cleaned and sanitized with a bleach dilution or a specific accelerated hydrogen peroxide product that kills the fungus. Examples of some areas you can use are a spare bathroom or a utility

room. It just needs to be somewhere with sanitizable furniture and hard floors instead of carpet.

- Supplies for treatment and general animal care are all included and provided by HSWM.
- If you have other pets, they will need to be kept completely separated due to the degree of contagion. The ringworm animals cannot be socialized with other animals in your household.
- Understanding & Patience: The amount of handling does not have to be limited, but you will need to take extra precautions to keep everyone safe and be diligent about cleanliness. It can be difficult to keep kittens, or any foster animal, for a few months without getting attached, but rest assured they will find forever families because of your care!
- Love and affection! These animals need just as much love, socialization, compassion, and enrichment as the next, they just happen to require a little bit different kind of care.
- It is best to not have someone in the household who has a compromised immune system that could be susceptible to getting infections or children handling the animals.

### **What exactly is provided to the foster home?**

As with all of our fosters, we provide all supplies and necessary items such as:

- Medications - Oral and topical
- Instructions on the treatment process
- PPE such as gloves, gowns, booties, and puppy pads.
- A foster kit to help you prepare your house and their area
- Support from the Foster Vet Tech and Foster Coordinator every step of the way

### **Why should I consider helping?**

- **Every foster parent is a true life-saver!**
- Due to exposure risks for the other animals, shelters have to handle cases of ringworm in a very regimented way - isolating the animals and limiting contact with them since we are handling so many other animals. This is a rather sad situation for the animals who need lots of attention, love, and playtime as we are unable to provide it unlike a foster home.
- Shelters are a high stress environment, and animals tend to get healthy faster and stay healthy in a less stressful home environment - aka foster.

### **What are the next steps?**

If you are ready and willing to join the Fungus Fighters, THANK YOU! Truly. You can reach out to the Foster Coordinator at [lfrontjes@hswestmi.org](mailto:lfrontjes@hswestmi.org) or join the foster team here: [Foster App](#)

Ringworm can be more prevalent in the warmer months, especially for us as we transfer animals in from shelters down South, but it still can show itself in the cooler months. An email request will be sent out whenever we do have ringworm animals who need fostering.

## Testimonies from current/previous ringworm fosters

### **Megan Girvin - Cleopatra**

“When we initially agreed to foster Cleopatra, we had no prior knowledge or experience with ringworm. We also have two resident dogs and cat in the home, so fostering an animal with ringworm with other animals can work!! Knowing that we needed to keep Cleopatra separate from the other animals, we had Cleopatra reside in a spare bathroom which was perfect because she needed to be in a space that you could keep clean easily. While the process of treating ringworm may sound daunting, it is actually quite simple and similar to any other animal that may require a little extra TLC while in care. HSWM did a phenomenal job of giving us the resources and materials to ensure our foster experience with a ringworm cat was successful- and it was!

To witness the transformation in Cleopatra was the most rewarding. You could see not only the physical change in her, but emotional as well when she started to feel better. To then witness the transformation and then go on to be adopted out, you feel a deep sense of pride in the extra work and effort that you put in to allow the animal to be adopted out, setting them up for a successful ever after!”

### **Corinne Verheek - Serafina and her four kittens**

“I started fostering ringworm cats/kittens because I understand just how important it is to get these guys out of the shelter and into a foster home for treatment and socialization. In the shelter they are often isolated to a cage to decrease the spread of the ringworm, whereas in a foster home I can provide a larger space for them to run and play. Fostering a ringworm cat or kitten is not much different than fostering a normal cat! While the fungus can spread to humans, I used the PPE gear provided by the shelter and wore another pair of clothing over my own. I purchased an inexpensive and disposable cat tunnel and some toys so that there is still plenty of enrichment and play time! It is hard not to kiss these precious fungus kitties but it did not change the way I bonded with them. The shelter provided me with a lot of information on ringworm and I also read and watched videos online to help prepare myself to welcome these kitties to my home! To help a sick kitten or cat is SO rewarding! The lime/sulfur baths for treatment were a breeze and giving the biweekly oral meds were so easy! I 100% recommend fostering a ringworm feline. “

