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Environmental Control for Dermatophytosis (Ringworm)

Dermatophytosis, also known as “ringworm”, is a fungal infection of the skin, hair, and claws. It is contagious to other animals and to humans. This fungus invades the structures listed above and produces hyphae and spores, which are the infective component of the organisms. Literally, millions of spores may be produced in severe infections. These spores can remain viable (infective) in the environment for over two years, and are very difficult to kill and eliminate from the environment.

Our goal in treating the environment is: to remove any loose hair or debris from the environment in order to reduce the likelihood of significant exposure of humans or other animals in the environment to infective spores.

General Considerations:

1. Environmental treatment should be focused on areas in which the pet(s) spend most of its (their) time. However, hair can be distributed throughout the home, so the entire premise should be addressed.
2. Reminder: this is a contagious disease to humans. Individuals at increased risk include infants, the elderly, and any individual with any immunosuppressive condition or on drugs that may reduce the effectiveness of the immune system. Consult your physician if you feel you or someone in your home might fall in this category.

Steps to be taken:

1. If the animal is shedding excessively, a total body clip may be indicated. This should be discussed with your veterinarian.
2. The home should be thoroughly vacuumed 1-2 times weekly. Areas that should be focused include carpets (including area rugs and mats), drapes, areas under beds, dog beds, furniture on which the animal has access,
3. Bedding, for the “people” beds, should be washed in hot water and changed frequently. Dog and/or cat beds should also be cleaned in hot water. Cat trees should be aggressively vacuumed or cleaned.
4. A dilution of bleach (1:10) may be used to disinfect tiles, linoleum, and cement. A small amount should be applied in a non-visible area to be sure excessively staining will not occur. Owners should wear gloves and a respiratory mask when mixing bleach. Concentrated bleach can be irritating and toxic to skin and eye.
5. Areas that cannot withstand a bleach solution should be wiped clean with any cleaning agent, mainly to pick up loose hair and debris.
6. Furnace filters should be changed weekly.
7. The roller lint removers may be used to clean hair from clothing, drapes, or other objects.

These cleaning / disinfecting procedures should be continued until the infection has been completely controlled.