

# NEWS

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## Ringworm: Pets and People at Risk

Pueblo Animal Services recently noticed an increase in diagnosed cases of ringworm on cats in Pueblo City and County. Ringworm is a fungus that infects the skin and is not caused by a worm; people can get ringworm from contact with an infected person, animal, or by touching objects or surfaces that had contact with the fungus.



“Cats in Pueblo have been confirmed to have ringworm and the potential exists that ringworm can spread from infected animals to other animals and people,” stated Dr. Patti Canchola, staff veterinarian at Pueblo Animal Services. Canchola explained, “Owned cats that had been surrendered to the shelter and stray cats brought into the shelter have been diagnosed with ringworm. Pueblo Animal Services has implemented special disease protocols to help prevent the spread of the fungus in the shelter, but encourages all cat owners to monitor their pets for possible symptoms.”

“Ringworm can be challenging to detect in cats since the lesions may be very mild or completely unnoticeable. These cats can then infect other animals or people,” explained Canchola.

Ringworm symptoms in cats can include hair loss around the nose, mouth or ears, but can also develop on the tail, paws or abdomen. If you have a pet and suspect the pet may have ringworm, contact your veterinarian as soon as possible. Testing and treatment options exist for animals diagnosed with ringworm. If one of your pets has ringworm, make sure every pet in the household is evaluated by a veterinarian for ringworm infection.

“Although ringworm is not a reportable public health condition, it is a fungus that humans can get from animals,” stated Jody Carrillo, division director of Disease Prevention and Emergency Preparedness at the Pueblo City-County Health Department. Carrillo added, “Remember ringworm is a fungal infection spread by direct contact, or skin-to-skin contact. Since children are more likely to have direct contact with each other, a child with a confirmed case of ringworm should be excluded from school or daycare until after the first treatment. Your doctor can provide further guidance appropriate for your family.

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If ringworm is diagnosed in a family pet or household member, follow the tips below to prevent further spread to other family members.

### **Prevention and Clean Up**

- Wash your hands with soap and running water after playing with or petting your pet.
- Wear gloves and long sleeves if you must handle animals with ringworm, and always wash your hands after handling the animal.
- Vacuum the areas of the home that the infected pet commonly visits. This will help to remove infected fur or flakes of skin.
- Confine infected pets to one room of the house or in a crate to avoid spreading ringworm.
- Disinfect areas the pet has spent time in, including surfaces and bedding.
  - The spores of this fungus can be killed with common disinfectants like chlorine bleach diluted 1:10 (1/4 cup in 1 gallon of water), benzalkonium chloride, or strong detergents.
  - Never mix cleaning products, as this may cause harmful gases. Always carefully follow the directions for use on cleaning product labels.
  - Wash all bedding in very hot water with detergent that contains color safe bleach.

For additional information please visit [www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/ringworm.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/diseases/ringworm.html).

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