



FIRESTAR
VETERINARY SERVICES LLC

Equine

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Equine Ringworm

Hint: it isn't a worm, it is a fungal infection!

If it isn't a worm, what is it? Ringworm is an annoying and nasty skin infection. This is only rarely serious, but it can be a serious headache for horse owners, and should be treated for the welfare of the horse. Plus this is one of the few things we can catch from horses, so treatment protects human health too.

In horses with ringworm you will see hair loss, often in round patches, spreading over the horse and then from

one horse to the next. Some get a lot of flaking, especially at the edges of the bald areas. Some horses get itchy, others don't. The really unlucky ones get painful inflamed lumps with pus. Once you have a ringworm infection in your herd, you will have to work diligently to keep it under control.

The first step is to confirm the diagnosis. This used to be one of the slowest tests we could do— the lab had to grow the fungus, and it is so very slow to grow. However, now we can run a PCR test and have the results in well under a week! Testing is important, as many things can look very similar to ringworm, including some bacterial infections, contact allergies, and some sarcoids (a type of skin cancer).

Look! Bleach tips!

- Use in well ventilated areas.
- Try to clean the object first! Dirt or manure will inactivate the bleach.
- To make a 1:40 dilution you only need 4 oz of bleach to 1 gallon of water.
- Do NOT use bleach on your horse!! It will dry the skin and make it more susceptible to all kinds of infection.
- If possible, dry your equipment in the sun—UV light helps to kill the fungus.

Treatment of ringworm involves topical treatment with anti-fungal medications, and often with oral anti-fungal medications. These oral medications are custom compounded. Depending on the time of year, we may also prescribe medicated shampoos.

Even as we are treating it, the infection will try to spread both on your horse and within your herd. It can be very frustrating as you try to get it under control.

Fast facts and tips:

- Clean, clean, clean, clean! Everything that touches the horse: tack, brushes and blankets! This cannot be over emphasized, as it can last years on these surfaces! Wash everything possible with soap and water, and then soak it down with bleach solution at a 1:40 dilution. (Note: the sprayers made for fly spray will often be marked to do the math for you!). Only spray spray in areas with really good ventilation—this is

important for your respiratory health, as well as your horse's.

- Sunshine is your friend! Dry items in the sun, and anything you cannot wash and bleach should be left in the sun too!
- Really look at every thing that touch the horses that have it! It is not uncommon for it to travel on the girth or a saddle used on more than one horse, or even on a rider's boots or pants. Identify these things, and be sure to inform everyone who comes in contact with the horse.
- Watch areas of the horse with other skin infections, with small wounds or with long hair that can trap moisture, as these are areas especially prone to infection.
- The very youngest and oldest can be among those who are high risk.
- Stress also increases risk—this can be physical or emotional stress.
- Even if you think the infection is over, don't share tack and equipment between horses without a complete cleaning! Ringworm isn't even nearly the worst thing you can spread, but it is pesky enough to be convincing.
- DON'T spray bleach or harsh chemicals on your horse's skin! Any compromise to the skin's delicate protective barrier will increase the risk for infection with bacteria or with more ringworm!

**IF YOU OR YOUR HORSE IS STRUGGLING, PLEASE
LET US KNOW!! WE CAN HELP!!**