



Ringworm Environmental Decontamination: How to Clean Your Home When Your Pet Has Ringworm

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Dermatophytosis, commonly called [ringworm](#), is a fungal infection of the fur and skin of dogs and cats. When your pet has ringworm, it is really important to clean and disinfect your home to prevent the spread of ringworm to other pets and to people.

How to Clean and Disinfect the Home

Thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting the home when a pet has ringworm is called environmental decontamination and is a two-step process.

STEP 1: Remove pet hair

Wipe, sweep, and/or vacuum the surface then thoroughly wash the surface until visibly clean of pet hair. Remove any excess water before Step 2.

STEP 2: Disinfect the surface.

Apply disinfectant and let sit for 5 min.

Step 1 is the most important step because many surfaces can be rid of ringworm by removing pet hair. Additionally, many disinfectants do not work in the presence of debris.

Below is a guide to cleaning and disinfecting various materials. Information is summarized from publications by veterinary dermatologist Dr. Karen Moriello of the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine.

Material	Cleaning Step	Disinfection Step
Carpeting (small area rugs)	Vacuum daily	Launder. Do not overload the washing machine. Wash separately from other laundry.



This Persian cat has generalized *M. canis* ringworm. Photo by Dr. Carol Foil.

Material	Cleaning Step	Disinfection Step
Carpeting (wall to wall)	Vacuum daily	Professional steam cleaning or Chemical disinfection (spray with a disinfectant then rinse with a carpet shampooer after 10 minutes of contact time)
Upholstered furniture	Vacuum daily or Lint rollers or duct tape daily	Professional steam cleaning or Chemical disinfection (spray with a disinfectant then rinse with a carpet shampooer after 10 minutes of contact time)
Hardwood floors	Vacuum daily or Use disposable electrostatic wipes daily (Swiffer® pad)	Wash with a cleaning product safe for hardwood flooring (e.g., Murphy's Oil Soap®)
Hospital towels	Launder daily and use laundry detergent. Wash twice on a long cycle (for ≥14 minutes). Use laundry detergent. Wash separately from other fabrics. Do not overload the washing machine.	
Cat trees, pet clothing, fabric collars, etc.	Discard all non-washable items. Wait until after your pet's infection has been treated to buy new items.	
Pet food bowls	Soak dishes in hot, soapy water, scrub until clean, and rinse. Wear dishwashing gloves for protection against infection.	



Laundry Tips for When Your Pet Has Ringworm

- Wash towels, bedding, and clothing that have been in contact with your infected pet separately from other household laundry. Wear gloves when handling dirty laundry.
- For any laundry, thoroughly washing is more important than the temperature setting for the washer or dryer. Use the longest wash cycle possible and do not overload the washing machine. This will help the washing machine remove infected pet hairs from the fabric.

Disinfection Tips for Ringworm

- Newer research shows that if the surface is first thoroughly cleaned, many disinfectants can be used to clean household surfaces. Examples include ready-to-use bathroom cleaners that are effective against *Trichophyton spp.* For any product, follow the instructions on the label and pay close attention to contact time.
- Household bleach (sodium hypochlorite) is an inexpensive option. Although dilutions as high as 1:10 have previously been reported, a lower dilution of 1:100 is also effective and less harsh on surfaces. Prepare fresh solutions each week and store in a dark container. Pay attention to the warnings on the bleach container and do not mix bleach with other cleaners. Bleach will damage some floor finishes, wood, and discolor fabrics.

- Accelerated hydrogen peroxide is a proprietary compound of concentrated hydrogen peroxide combined with other cleaners. It is different from the bottles of dilute hydrogen peroxide available at drugstores and may be available from your pet's veterinarian.
- In households with less than 2 pets infected with ringworm, twice weekly cleaning and disinfection should be sufficient. However, any visible pet hair should be removed daily.



Tips for Making Cleaning and Disinfection Easier When Your Pet has Ringworm

- Try to keep your pet in an easily cleanable room that does not have carpeting or clutter. Bathrooms and other rooms with hard surface flooring work great.
- Change your pet's bedding daily and use easy-to-laundry fabrics.
- After vacuuming, dispose of the vacuum bag at least weekly and wear gloves when handling the vacuum bag.
- Because cleaning and disinfection need to continue until your pet's ringworm infection has been cured, follow the treatment recommendations from your pet's veterinarian. This will help your pet recover from the infection as soon as possible.

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