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Dr. Samantha Carter is from Elgin, Illinois and grew up competing on her Thoroughbred in hunter/jumper competitions. She received a bachelor's degree in Animal Science from Iowa State University and her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from University of Illinois.

Her areas of interest include sport horse medicine, reproduction and preventative medicine. In her free time Sam enjoys horseback riding and running.

Ringworm in Horses

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Ringworm can be a frustrating condition due to its unsightly appearance, contagiousness, and the cost of its treatment. In fact, the name ringworm itself is a misnomer. This skin infection is actually caused by a fungus, not a parasite, and in horses there are 2 main species called *Trichophyton* and *Microsporum*.

Clinical signs of a ringworm infection include loss of hair in a circular pattern, crusting, and hive-like lesions. As the hair falls out the skin looks raw but this progresses to grey flaky skin prior to the hair regrowing. As is the case for many other conditions, young horses and immunocompromised horses are more susceptible to the disease.

Ringworm can be diagnosed by fungal culture. A less reliable diagnostic measure includes plucking hair from the infected area and examining it under the microscope. In many cases, a presumptive diagnosis of ringworm is deduced, and treatment is initiated without a definitive diagnosis.

In some cases, ringworm can resolve spontaneously without treatment. This is a less than desirable approach since the horse will still be contagious and spreading the disease during this time. Treatment includes topical anti-fungals, such as dilute betadine baths, and topical powders, sprays or creams. Individual lesions are often treated with topicals such as ketoconazole spray or clotrimazole. Griseofulvin is an oral paste that is also available. The aim of treatment is to kill the fungus and the infective spores

Ringworm can be a frustrating disease since it is extremely contagious. This skin disease is easily passed from horse to horse through direct contact, or shared equipment, such as grooming tools and tack. Equipment and housing should be disinfected with bleach and the horse quarantined from other horses to prevent the spread of the disease to other horses in the barn. However, some spores can remain dormant in wood in the stall for several months so horses can become infected unexpectedly. Ringworm is a zoonotic disease, which means that it can be passed from animal to human. Therefore, diligent hand-washing along with the use of gloves is recommended to prevent contracting the disease.

References

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