

Points on Pets: Child and dog may share ringworm diagnosis

by R.G._Elmor_DVM

Q: We are embarrassed because we have noticed that both our dog and our son have some similar bare spots. Our dog has some circular areas where his hair has fallen out, and our son has a spot on his head where he has lost some hair. All of the sores, the ones on the dog and the one our son, look very much alike.

Our dog sleeps in our son's bed and he is always hugging the dog. Is it possible that they both have ringworm? Could our son get ringworm from our dog?

We thought that ringworm only occurred in situations where there was filth and poor hygienic practices.

A: It is impossible to tell you whether or not your dog has ringworm without actually seeing him and without knowing much more about the situation. It is important that you have your dog examined by your veterinarian and your son seen by your physician as soon as possible. Some forms of ringworm are transmissible between animals and humans.

If your veterinarian finds that your dog has ringworm, you should immediately institute some precautionary procedures during the treatment period to reduce the chance that anyone in your family will be further exposed. Since three of the four most common organisms causing ringworm can easily be transmitted between pets and humans, infected dogs should be isolated during treatment. All articles that have been in contact with the infected pet should be destroyed if possible. Carpets and furniture can easily become contaminated and, therefore, should be thoroughly cleaned. Following cleaning, precautions should be taken to keep household goods clean.

Most ringworm infections in pets and humans can be successfully treated. You should not be embarrassed that your dog and son have shared a common disease. Ringworm is diagnosed everywhere and is not only a disease seen in filthy conditions. Hopefully, this situation will not cause you to enjoy your dog any less.

Q: We recently noticed that our old dog has a large lump on his chest. Is this something to be concerned about?

Since our dog is old and probably does not have a long time left, we do not want to put him through a lot of diagnostic procedures or surgery. Is it possible that the lump is cancer?

A: Because it is impossible to tell you whether or not your dog's lump is serious without actually seeing him, you should have him examined by your veterinarian as soon as possible. Obtaining an accurate diagnosis will help you make decisions about treatment and give you peace of mind that you have done what you can for your aging companion.

It is possible that the lump is not serious and can be removed with a simple surgical procedure that will not cause your dog a lot of pain or discomfort. Your veterinarian can give you the best advice on how to handle your dog's problem.

Write to Pets, P.O. Box 120190, San Diego, CA 92112-0190. Only questions of general interest will be answered in this column.

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