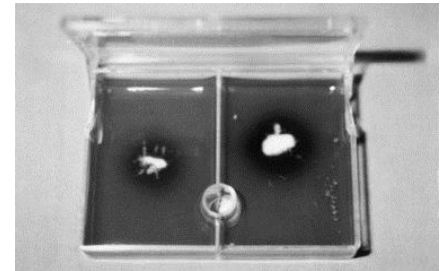


What is a dermatophyte?

A dermatophyte is a type of fungal infection of the skin, hair, or nails that can affect animals or humans. Dermatophytes are more commonly known as ringworm.

What is a dermatophyte culture?

A dermatophyte (fungal) culture is the name given to the laboratory test that determines what specific fungi may be present in a sample.



How is a dermatophyte culture performed?

Culture: Samples are taken from the affected area with a toothbrush or by plucking your pet's hair. The veterinary staff will spread the sample across the surface of a jelly-like medium called agar, which is contained in a petri dish. The petri dish is nothing more than a plastic dish with a cover. The agar and petri dish together are often called a 'culture plate.' For a dermatophyte culture, the culture plate is called Dermatophyte Test Medium or DTM. A DTM plate has two different sides (as shown above), each side contains medium with different types of nutrients to allow the different dermatophytes to grow. In addition, DTM culture plates contain several different antibiotics, which serve to inhibit growth of bacteria and allow the growth of dermatophytes. The culture plates contain a color indicator, which will often change color when certain types of dermatophytes take up the nutrients on the culture media and grow. DTM plates are incubated at room temperature and observed daily for growth. After dermatophyte growth appears on the DTM plate it is examined by the veterinarian macroscopically and microscopically in order to identify the type of dermatophyte present.

PCR: Polymerase Change Reaction or PCR is another test that may be used to identify the dermatophyte. PCR is a laboratory technique used to amplify single or few copies of a specific DNA region to levels where it can be easily detected. PCR is a fast diagnostic tool for dermatophytosis in cats and dogs. Samples are taken from the affected area in the same manner as for a DTM plate. Results are typically available in 1-3 working days. Because PCR is not always as accurate as a dermatophyte culture, your veterinarian may recommend both tests.



How long will it take to get the results of dermatophyte culture?

Most organisms will appear within 7-10 days; however, when no growth is seen initially or when the sample has been obtained from a pet receiving antifungal therapy, the results can take as long as 21 days.

How are the results used?

The veterinarian determines the best method of treatment after knowing the exact dermatophyte species present.