

A HUMAN CASE OF TRICHOPHYTON EQUINUM INFECTION

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Of the various dermatophyte species which cause ringworm in animals many are easily and frequently transmitted to man. *Microsporum canis*, for example, which is the cause of most ringworm in cats and dogs, is in many countries the fungus most frequently isolated from cases of tinea capitis.

Trichophyton equinum, the chief aetiological agent of ringworm in horses, is exceptional in that it rarely causes human infection. This article describes the first case of this kind observed in South Africa.

Historical Survey

The first published account of ringworm of horses was that of Matruchot and Dassenville in 1898,¹ who described an epizootic among horses of an artillery regiment in France. They reported that several of the men in charge of the horses became infected, developing lesions in the neck area. They described the macroscopic and microscopic features of the fungus involved, but did not name it; this was later done by Gedoelst in 1902.² Sabrouaud in 1908³ isolated *T. equinum* from a number of horses and he also described 3 cases of human infection. Two were of the bearded area of the face—in one there was considerable tissue reaction with formation of a kerion; the other presented an early lesion about 1½ cm. in diameter on the tip of the chin. The third case was an infection of the glabrous skin of the neck and chin in a woman.

In a recent survey of animal ringworm carried out in the USA,⁴ no human infections caused by *T. equinum* were observed, and in a similar survey in the UK⁵ Ainsworth and Austwick did not report transmission of equine ringworm to man. In many of the published accounts of epizootics among horses, however, human contagion is reported, but the number of cases is usually low.⁶⁻⁸

Observations

The first outbreak of equine ringworm we investigated

occurred on a breeder's farm to which an apparently healthy yearling had been sent back from the trainer's stables in Cape Town. Soon after arrival the yearling developed signs of ringworm, and the lesions rapidly became confluent over the head, neck and withers. *T. equinum* was isolated. Within a few weeks the infection had spread to about 100 yearlings and 4-month-old foals. A number of infected 2- and 3-year-olds were found at the trainer's stables. Older horses are apparently less susceptible. Of 8 horses tested, 7 were infected with *T. equinum*, the eighth with *T. verrucosum*, a species commonly causing ringworm in cattle, but relatively rare in equine infections.

A jockey at the trainer's stable developed a lesion after applying a vibrator used on the horses to a painful spot on his leg. The lesion appeared at the exact site of application of the vibrator: it consisted of a red, shiny, slightly scaling patch about 3 × 2 cm. in diameter with one small pustule. It was of about 2 months' duration and 'itched intolerably'. Of all the people at risk, European and non-European, in the several farms and breeders' stables we have inspected, this was the only infection reported.

Treatment

The jockey was given griseofulvin (0.5 G. orally) daily for 6 weeks. The lesion is reported to have cleared up.

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