

As a true no kill shelter, PFOA never euthanizes a cat for any reason other than a terminal illness—not for lack of space or for the amount of time, trouble or money required to help a furry friend. If one of our previously adopted cats needs to return to Safe Haven, we welcome them back, even though we regret their loss of home and family. When Paisley, one of our adoptees, became ill with diabetes, this sweet eight year old came back to the shelter with an unexpected hostess gift, ringworm!!! We would have preferred a nice box of chocolates.

The word ringworm strikes fear into the heart of every shelter. While the actual fungus is usually nothing more than a rash similar to athlete's foot in humans, it is highly contagious to kittens. Most adult cats have immunity to ringworm, but cats with compromised immune systems (such as Paisley and her roomies with kidney failure and diabetes) can contract the disease. It requires a 1:10 bleach solution or other strong disinfectants to kill, and EVERY surface must be wiped down. The cats are dipped every few days with a non-toxic lime sulfur dip (that smells like rotten eggs and the cats do NOT appreciate) to kill the spores that cause the lesions, which are sampled and cultured. Then we get to disinfect the whole environment again, while wearing gowns, hats and booties!! The expense, extra work of decontaminating the premises, and just the general stress of an outbreak takes a tremendous toll on an open-cattery shelter such as ours. Since we have comfy furniture and beds, cat-trees, and enclosed outdoor play areas, we are left with a huge job to make the shelter safe again for the resident cats, and those waiting to come.

Every cat that comes into our shelter undergoes a thorough vet examination and spends two full weeks isolated in our quarantine room. While we observed the proper protocols for Paisley, her symptoms did not present until later, unfortunately. In the past 17 years, we have had two groups of kittens with ringworm, but this is our first time dealing with adult cats. Having been involved with the care for all three of these outbreaks, I can tell you that the big cats are much harder work, and more difficult to diagnose. Kittens are always isolated away from other cats, and they are easier to dip and move for treatment. They are also more relaxed and forgiving of the whole process.

We have embarked on an ambitious program to properly disinfect the premises. But, to avoid any possible exposure to our human friends or their pets, we will close the shelter to the public for two weeks. The kitty's spots have already started to disappear-- we hope the mountains of laundry will, as well. We will keep you posted as to our progress.