

LOVE IS CONTAGIOUS

BY DR TERI

“He says his sister gave him this kitten,” my technician told me. “He didn’t even want it. He doesn’t want to spend any money on it.” “Mm hmm,” I replied, not really focusing yet. “It looks to me like it has fleas, and worms, and ear mites...and ringworm.” said my technician. This got my full attention. Things don’t just “look like things” to veterinary technicians. Like human medicine, where a good nurse is worth 10 so-so doctors, veterinary technicians are the powerhouse of our profession. They have most problems diagnosed, tests running and treatments started before they even call me. It didn’t sound like “no money” was going to be a good option.

We walked into the room and then immediately walked right back out, and did not reappear until we were in the veterinary version of Level 4 isolation anti-Ebola gear – gowns, masks, head net, gloves, the whole bit. Not only was that impossibly cute, impossibly scruffy kitten teeming with parasites and the bald patches that famously herald the presence of the fungal infection ringworm, but both the owner and his girlfriend were covered – were covered in red blotchy skin lesions — over their faces, and their arms, their necks disappearing ominously into their shirt collars. All visible human skin was covered in angry scaly red blotches. I had never seen such a virulent ringworm jump species so successfully. And so fast! In fact, the couple was not here exactly because of the kitten, but because 10 days after they got the kitten, these lesions showed up on them. Oh, and they already had 2 cats, both fully exposed to the new little bundle of joy and both starting to look a little moth-eaten.

These were all treatable problems – for all 5 of them – the kitten, the 2 cats, plus the 2 people. Treatment involved flea medicine, deworming, ear mite medicine, ear cleaning, bathing and anti-fungal medications for all of the cats. Visits to a human physician for the young couple was a must, as well as counseling that all new little bundles of joy in a home should be kept in quarantine until their first veterinary exam, which should be as soon as possible. It was not that cheap, but it would have been less expensive to treat one of them rather than all 5!