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CANINE SARCOPTIC MANGE

The condition we call mange is a parasitic skin disease caused by microscopic mites. Two different mange mites cause mange in dogs. One mite causes a condition we refer to as sarcoptic mange, and lives just under the surface of the skin. The other mite causes a condition called demodectic mange, and it resides deep in the hair follicles. Although both mites share similar characteristics, there are also important differences. It is important not to confuse the two types of mange because they have different causes, treatments, and prognoses.

Focus of this article.

The focus of this article is on sarcoptic mange. It is fortunate that we do not often see this variety, because sarcoptic mange is contagious to both other dogs and to humans. A dog with sarcoptic mange needs to be treated immediately. To learn more about the more common mange variety, called demodectic mange, please refer to the article entitled CANINE DEMODECTIC MANGE.

What causes sarcoptic mange?

Sarcoptic mange is caused by a parasitic mite, *Sarcoptes Scabiei*, which burrows just beneath the surface of the skin. The mite feeds on material in and on the skin. The condition is also known as *scabies*. It causes what is called a zoonotic disease, meaning a disease transmissible from pets to people.

What does it do to the dog?

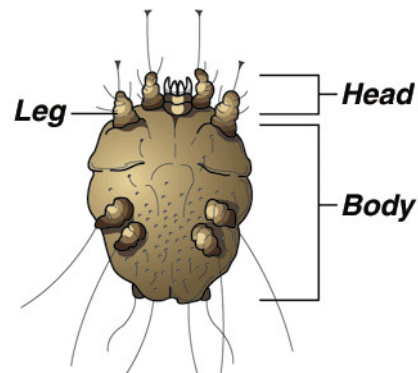
The presence of the sarcoptic mite causes intense itching. The dog will chew and scratch its skin constantly. This leads to the loss of large amounts of hair, especially on the legs and belly. Eventually, the skin will become thickened and will darken.

Is it contagious?

Sarcoptic mange is highly contagious to other dogs and to humans. The dog's bedding should be discarded or regularly washed in hot water diluted with bleach (one ounce per gallon). Although sarcoptic mites are not able to complete their life cycle on humans, they will cause severe itching until they die in two to five days.

How is sarcoptic mange diagnosed?

A diagnosis of sarcoptic mange is confirmed by examining a skin scraping under a microscope. It is common, however, not to see mites when performing a skin scraping. This is due to the fact that the mites burrow deep into the skin and that it takes only a few mites to cause significant itching. A presumptive diagnosis is made on clinical signs and treatment is begun. Sarcoptic mange may occur in any dog at any time.



Sarcoptic mange (underside)
(30x actual size)

How is it treated?

There are several medications that are effective against *Sarcoptes Scabiei*. One of our veterinarians will discuss the best treatment for your pet's condition. Treatment varies, including medicated baths and dips, injections, and oral medications. Many pets will require a combination of treatments to resolve this infection.

Home Care

Discard any bedding or wash it in diluted bleach solution (one ounce bleach per one gallon of water).

If your dog is still scratching after four to five days, please contact us for an appointment to have your dog re-examined.

If any member of the family develops itching or a skin rash, contact your family doctor immediately. Tell your doctor that you may have been exposed to sarcoptic mange, or scabies. In people, the mite cannot complete its life cycle so it will die in a few days. However, it may cause intense itching during that time and medical treatment is often recommended.

Any other questions?

If you have any other questions about sarcoptic mange, just let us know. We love your pet just like you do and want to do everything we can to help ensure that it has a healthy, happy life.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by Ernest Ward, DVM.
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