

Veterinary Specialists Inc.

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SARCOPTIC MANGE (Canine Scabies)

Sarcoptic mange is a skin disease caused by the parasitic mite *Sarcoptes scabiei*. This mange is contagious and produces intense itching, reddening, thinning of the hair, and crusts (scabs). The mite is fairly host specific, so dog scabies mites primarily affect dogs and other canids (coyotes, foxes, and wolves). However, they can attack other hosts (e.g. cats, humans) for periods of time.

The mites burrow into the skin, where they deposit eggs that hatch in 3 to 10 days. The larvae burrow up to the skin surface to feed and molt into a nymph stage. The nymphs travel on the skin surface to feed. They molt into adults, which then mate and deposit more eggs in the skin. The entire life cycle is complete in 3 weeks. The favorite habitats of mites are the earflaps, elbows, abdomen, and hocks. If untreated, the disease will spread throughout the entire body.

SCABIES IS ONE OF THE MOST ITCHIEST SKIN DISEASES IN A DOG!

Scabies can be diagnosed by skin scrapings. However, the mite is not easily found on skin scrapings of dogs as it is in cats. Therefore, if your pet is very itchy and is showing signs and lesions suggestive of scabies, your veterinarian may go ahead and treat for these mites.

IMPORTANT POINTS IN TREATMENT

- 1) Other dogs should not be allowed to come into contact with your pet or its bedding until recovery is complete.
- 2) The disease is contagious in a kennel or hospital!! You should thoroughly clean the environment and use insecticide sprays on kennels, shipping crates, harnesses, collars, and grooming tools.
- 3) It is important to treat all dogs in contact or on the premises, because some may be asymptomatic carriers. Some dogs respond dramatically, and in 7-10 days, itching ceases and the lesions dry up. Other dogs experience itching for 3-4 weeks after treatment has started. It is believed that death of the mites causes a hypersensitivity reaction and this makes the dog itchier while being treated.
- 4) Treatment should not be stopped too early, because it could take months to treat relapses. Treatment is not completed until the last egg has hatched and the last mite is killed. This usually means at least 4 weeks of treatment.
- 5) Treatments available include topical as lyme sulfur dips and oral or injectable medications as ivermectin. Specific treatment for each dog is determined by breed type and circumstances surrounding the case.
- 6) Some dogs may have secondary skin infections due to the intense itching. Your veterinarian will treat these infections appropriately with oral and topical medications.
- 7) Since this mite can be contagious to humans, please see your physician or dermatologist should you note lesions on yourself.
- 8) This mite can also be contagious to other species, as cats. Please let your veterinarian know if you have other pets in the house besides your dog.