

External Parasites: Sarcoptic Mange

The Basics Of Sarcoptic Mange

Known to most people as scabies, these microscopic mites have not earned much of a fan base. Although they are only a few tenths of a millimeter long, they cause numerous problems with the skin of dogs, cats, foxes, and people. However, they seem to prefer dogs and they affect all ages and breeds. Sarcoptic mites present symptoms similar to allergies.

Rather than belonging to the insect family, sarcoptic mites have closer relatives in the arachnid family (i.e. spiders and scorpions).

Sarcoptic Mange Species

- *Sarcoptes scabiei*

The Life Cycle Of Sarcoptic Mange

Sarcoptic mites have a short life span of two to three weeks and they usually live their entire lives on the same dog. The female mite burrows into the skin of her host and can create tunnels several centimeters in length. Along the way, she deposits her eggs. The female mite dies before the eggs hatch in four to seven days. The larvae molt once into nymphs and again into adults. Each of these three life stages burrow randomly through the skin.

Transmission of Sarcoptic Mange

Most dogs encounter sarcoptic mites in locations where dogs congregate such as the dog park or the beach. The mites can survive off their canine hosts for up to half a week or more. Direct contact with an infested dog is unnecessary to have exposure to sarcoptic mites. They simply crawl upon a passing "dog of opportunity."

Symptoms Of Sarcoptic Mange Infestation

Dogs with sarcoptic mange usually have topical symptoms on their skin.

- Dogs have several to numerous skin lesions with thinning or a lack of hair.
- In severe cases, the entire body may be affected.
- Lesions may develop small red pustules and a yellow crust.
- Dogs will be constantly and incredibly itchy.
- Dogs may develop secondary skin infections
- Lymph nodes may enlarge in untreated dogs.

Treatment And Prevention Of Sarcoptic Mange

To remove an infestation of sarcoptic mange, a pet will most likely receive a series of medicated dips over several weeks. Nursing care at home typically includes topical creams, medicated shampoos and possibly oral antibiotics. Treatment of sarcoptic mange is usually very successful with faithful care. Any types of secondary skin infections and other symptoms are dealt with on a case by case basis.

To prevent your pet from having an infestation of sarcoptic mites, give it regular veterinary care and encourage a clean, happy lifestyle. Dogs with suppressed immune systems develop an infestation because their immune systems cannot manage the mites. As well, dogs under stress, either from infection or from their home environment, are more likely to have problems.

Possibility Of Human Complications From Sarcoptic Mange

People can become infested with sarcoptic mites from dogs, but this disease usually only causes temporary itching. The human Sarcoptes mite typically causes many more problems.

For more information about human infestation of sarcoptic mange, contact North Shore Veterinary Clinic at 847-966-3080.