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Sarcoptic Mange in Dogs

What causes sarcoptic mange?

Sarcoptic mange is caused by a parasitic mite (*Sarcoptes scabiei*) that burrows just beneath the surface of the skin. It is important not to confuse sarcoptic mange with **demodectic mange**, which is caused by a different parasitic mite (see handout "Demodectic Mange in Dogs" for further information).

"Sarcoptic mange is a zoonotic disease or a disease transmissible from pets to people."

These mites bury into the skin of healthy adult dogs and puppies, and feed on material in and on the skin. Sarcoptic mange is also known as **scabies** and is **zoonotic**, which means it is a disease transmissible from pets to people.

What does it do to the dog?

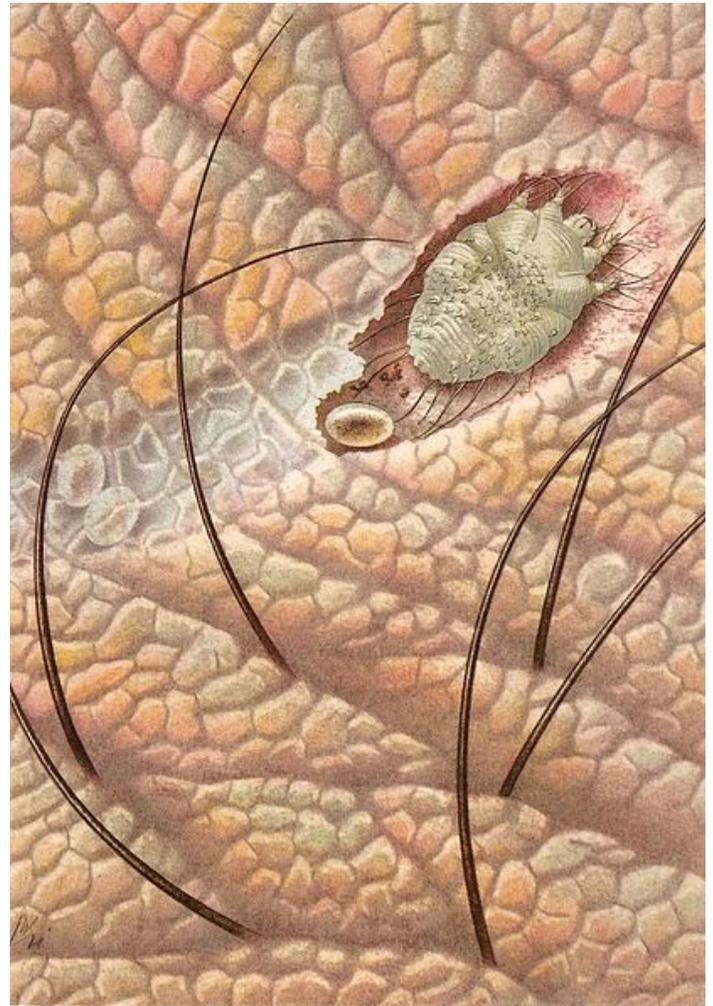
The presence of the sarcoptic mite causes intense itching. The dog will chew and scratch its skin constantly. This leads to the loss of large amounts of hair, especially on the legs and belly. Eventually, the skin will become thickened and will darken.

Is it contagious?

Yes. Sarcoptic mange is highly contagious to other dogs and humans.

Although sarcoptic mites are not able to complete their life cycle on humans, they will cause severe itching until they die.

Since the mite may be found in areas where infected dogs or foxes frequent, keep your dog away from these areas to attempt to prevent infection.



How is sarcoptic mange diagnosed?

Diagnosis is made by a skin scraping examined under the microscope. It is common not to see sarcoptic mange mites when performing a skin scraping. This is because the mites burrow deep into the skin and it takes only a few mites to cause significant itching.

Just because no mites are seen, does not mean your dog does not have sarcoptic mange. A presumptive diagnosis may therefore be made, based on clinical signs. Sarcoptic mange may occur in any dog at any age.

How is it treated?

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

Topical treatments may be divided into two categories:

- 1) **Dips.** Some of the dips that are used to treat *Sarcoptes* include amitraz and lime-sulfur dip. Your veterinarian will provide you with information on how to use these dips.
- 2) **Topicals.** Medication applied topically to one or two spots while the animal is dry. These medications are applied every 14–30 days or as your veterinarian recommends. Some examples of these topical medications include selamectin, imidacloprid and moxidectin, fipronil among many others.

Just like topical medications, there are a wide variety of **oral medications** available for the treatment of sarcoptic mange. These oral medications may be prescribed in the form of liquid, pill, or flavored chew, depending on the medication prescribed. Some of these oral medications include milbemycin (the active ingredient of Interceptor® and Sentinel®), afoxolaner (NexGard®), fluralaner (Bravecto®), and sarolaner (Simparica®). These medications are used '**off label**' for the treatment of sarcoptic mange. The term '**off label**' describes the use of a drug for conditions other than what it was approved for. Many of these medications are given for multiple treatments. To prevent re-infection, discard any bedding where your dog sleeps, or wash it frequently in diluted bleach solution (one ounce bleach in one gallon of water). If your dog is still scratching four to five days after treatment has started, please contact your veterinarian.

Can I get mange from my dog?

Yes. 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.

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

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