



Sarcoptic Mange

When people say “that mangy mutt”, they are often referring to a dog with sarcoptic mange or scabies. A mite causes this skin condition producing intense itching, scaling, and hair loss. It is very contagious between pets and people. This disease usually affects dogs but in rare cases, can affect cats.

Sarcoptic mites are parasites that burrow into the surface of the skin and secrete highly allergic substances. This causes intense itching and scratching. These mites can attack at any time of the year and are transmitted from pet to pet, pet to human, or human to pet. Pets exposed to other pets (such as shelters, groomers, boarding, or dog parks) are at a higher risk. Wildlife can also carry this parasite and bring it into your yard.

A dog with sarcoptic mange will be very itchy all of the time. He will have a positive pinnal-pedal reflex. If you scratch the edge of the ear, the back leg will have a scratching action reflex.



As the dog scratches and the mites cause damage to the skin surface, the skin will have hair loss and crusting at the elbows, hocks, and ear margins. Over time, the infestation can cover the entire body. Secondary skin infections also occur.

Diagnosis of this mite can be difficult. Several superficial skin scrapes are performed to look for the mite. This involves scraping the surface of the skin to obtain a sample to view under the microscope. Usually the mites are difficult to find since it doesn't take many mites to cause the severe reaction.

Treatment is often given when sarcoptic mange is suspected, regardless of whether or not mites have been seen. Medications are given to kill the mites along with antibiotics or anti-fungal medicine for any secondary infection.

Since the mites are contagious, treat all pets in a house at the same time even if they aren't showing signs yet. Separate your pets from other animals until the treatment is complete. Do not let your pets sleep on your bedding and wash bedding in hot water often. Always wash your hands after touching your pets. If you think you may have contracted Sarcoptic mange, contact your physician.

