

SARCOPTIC MANGE

Sarcoptic mange, or scabies, of the dog is a parasitic disease of the skin. The mite that causes scabies is known as *Sarcoptes Scabiei*.

Scabies is transmitted by direct contact from an infected dog to an uninfected dog and most exposed dogs show some disease.

This mite, who cannot be seen without a microscope, actually burrows through the dog's skin. This burrowing is perceived by the dog as extreme itchiness. Continuous biting and scratching will be noticed. The skin usually becomes very thickened, hair loss is evident, and secondary bacterial infections are common. The dog will develop very crusty skin as the disease continues. Often times, the disease becomes severe enough that the dog's general health is affected.

To diagnose this disease, the veterinarian should do a skin scraping to try to identify mites. These mites are difficult to find, so multiple skin scrapings may not reveal the mites.

Treatment may include special baths or soaks to remove skin crusts. Antibiotics may be needed for secondary skin infections. Special drugs may be used to reduce the itchiness. To actually kill the mites, your veterinarian may use injections, insecticide dips, or a combination of the two. Other companion dogs may need to be treated as they may serve as a source of infection. Usually, dogs have an excellent recovery rate.

Owners of infected dogs may notice that they themselves are experiencing itchiness. Dog scabies can and do infect owners at a rate of 10-40% (probably closer to 10%). This mite will not live on humans for long periods of time but while it inhabits humans it can be a pretty miserable time. If you are experiencing itchiness and have been in close contact with a scabies dog, you should contact your doctor for medications to eliminate an infection.