



Sarcoptic mange

Sarcoptic mange is a skin disease caused by a microscopic mite. Dogs with sarcoptic mange are frantically itchy. Skin is commonly reddened and crusty; it may ooze with fluid or bleed. It most often starts on the head and forelimbs but can spread to any part of the body. It is extremely contagious between dogs. Additionally, 90% of the fox population carry the disease and are commonly the source of canine infection. There doesn't have to be direct contact with the fox.

Humans have their own form of sarcoptic mange mite, which causes a skin disease called scabies. Dog sarcoptic mites cannot actually infest humans, but they can transiently attach to owners and cause an intensely itchy rash. If you have skin symptoms when your dog has mange, we would advise that you consult your GP. Likewise, other non-canine pets can pick up the mite but they will not become infested.

Often, a Vet can recognise or strongly suspect sarcoptic mange based on the appropriate clinical signs. The disease can be confirmed by scraping a sample of skin and analysing it. However, the mites are not easy to find and a negative result does not guarantee that the dog does not have sarcoptic mange. A blood test is also available now.

Thankfully, sarcoptic mange is easily treated by using a "spot on" preparation, by prescription. This is a small amount of liquid drug applied to the skin at the back of the animal's neck. The mites get a dose when they feed from the skin. All dogs in the house and any others which your pet has regular contact with should be treated. Sometimes the above treatment is not sufficient and these dogs are washed with a prescribed, chemical shampoo.