

University of California, Davis
Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital
Davis, CA 95616

Small Animal Clinic: 530-752-1393
Dermatology Service

Information for Clients

SARCOPTIC MANGE

Introduction

Sarcoptic mange, also known as “scabies” refers to the infestation of the canine mite, *Sarcoptes scabiei* var. *canis*, or the feline mite, *Notoedres cati*. Scabies mites are species specific, but can be transiently transferred to other animals and humans. Sarcoptic mange is intensely itchy, with clinical signs beginning 1-2 weeks after exposure. Left untreated, the mites multiply rapidly with severe itching and notable skin lesions usually within 30 days of initial exposure. On other species, the mites usually die off within 2 weeks, if contact with infected animals is terminated. However, reinfestation can occur if all contact animals are not treated. Fortunately, the mites do not survive for long periods of time off the host. In ideal conditions, (lower temperatures and high humidity) female mites can live up to 21 days. The average survival time is 4-6 days. Sarcoptic mites are microscopic, and can only be visualized under a microscope at 100 times magnification. Animals most at risk for contracting scabies have lifestyles that involve meeting multiple other animals. Dog parks, boarding kennels, and grooming parlors have all been implicated in the spread of scabies. Animals that have contact with foxes and coyotes are also at risk..

Clinical Signs

Intense itching is the number one sign of a scabies infestation. Only a very few other disorders can be as itchy. The areas of the body most often affected are the elbows, hocks and edges of the earflaps (ear margins). Sarcoptic mites prefer less haired areas, and usually attack these areas initially. A fine red rash may be evident over the chest and abdomen. As the condition progresses, thick, yellowish crusts will develop at the affected areas. The condition is progressive, if left untreated, and often does not respond well to traditional anti-itch therapies.

Diagnosis

Sarcoptic mange is diagnosed by *either* microscopic examination of a skin scraping, *or* response to appropriate therapy. The mites can be very difficult to find on skin scraping. They are only visualized about 30% of the time. Visualizing one mite, mite egg, or mite fecal material on a skin scraping is diagnostic.