

Sarcoptic Mange

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Sarcoptic mange is a common cause of pruritus in dogs. It is the second most common cause of canine pruritus in our practice (aside from allergies and complications of allergies). Fox, coyotes and dogs can carry Sarcoptic mange. Dogs can contract Sarcoptic mange all year round – even in the winter.

Despite up to 100,000 fox harvested each year in MN, the fox population remains strong <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mammals/redfox.html> Fox frequent parks, lawns and groves. Hair falls from the fox, and if a dog rolls in the hair, the mite infection will be transferred. Sarcoptic mange can also be passed from dog to dog at dog parks or grooming salons. Some dogs are asymptomatic carriers and some dogs become intensely itchy.

Diagnostic clues for diagnosing Sarcoptic mange:

- Short history of pruritus
- Multiple pruritic dogs in the home
- Humans in home are pruritic
- Previously well controlled allergic dog having a pruritic flare
- Positive pinna pedal reflex and/or Positive elbow pedal reflex
- Crusting of ear margins or elbows
- Mites identified on skin scraping
- Pruritus persists despite prednisone

Any one of the above signs can be reason enough to treat for Sarcoptic mange. Suspicion of Sarcoptic mange should increase if the owner has observed fox in the neighborhood. Sometimes people in the home will be pruritic, but the dogs are not perceived to be pruritic. This is an indication to treat for Sarcoptic mange. Sometimes a pet will have a positive pinna pedal reflex, but no mites can be found on skin scraping. A positive pinna pedal reflex alone is an indication to treat for Sarcoptic mange. To test for a pinna pedal reflex, the clinician should use his fingernail to scratch the margin (very outside perimeter of the ear) to determine if an itch response can be elicited. Scratch the edge of the ear and if the back leg thumps – treat for Sarcoptic mange. Scratch multiple areas along the ear edge.

The incidence of sarcoptic mange in dogs seems to be decreasing, and this is likely due to the advent of isoxazolines. Nexgard, Bravecto and Simparica are flea and tick preventatives that also have excellent efficacy against mites.

How to treat a dog suspected of having Sarcoptic mange:

- All dogs in the household must be treated at the same time. Failure to do so will result in re-infestation of mites.
- Cats in the home do not have to be treated.
- Wash pet's bedding.
- Treat secondary pyoderma with a cephalosporin.
- Systemic treatment is preferred over topical treatment in most cases to reduce chance of treatment failure.
- Administer an isoxazoline at label dose and frequency. Consider combining with topical selamectin.
- Give ivermectin 0.3mg/kg SQ every 14 days for a total of 3 injections
- Give milbemycin oxime 2mg/kg PO every 14 days for a total of 3 doses
- Apply selamectin according to label dosing to a shaved area on the skin every 2 weeks for a total of 3 to 4 treatments.