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## Sarcoptic Mange

### Issue Description

*These mites dig into and through the skin, causing intense itching and crusting that can quickly become infected. Hair loss and crusting frequently appear first on elbows and ears. Skin damage can occur from the dog's intense scratching and biting and secondary skin infection is common. Dogs with chronic sarcoptic mange are often in poor condition. Sarcoptic mange mites are usually spread by direct contact from host to host. While mites can live off of a host for days to weeks depending on their life stage, they are only infective for 36 hours, which means that environmental decontamination is generally not necessary.*

### Other Names

*Canine Scabies*

### Symptoms and Diagnosis

Mites prefer hairless skin thus leaving the ear flaps, elbows and abdomen at highest risk for the red, scaly itchy skin that characterizes sarcoptic mange. It should be noted that this pattern of itching is similar to that found with airborne allergies (atopy) as well as with food allergies. Frequently, before attempting to sort out allergies, a veterinarian will simply treat a patient for sarcoptic mange as a precaution. It is very easy to be led down the wrong path (pursuing allergy aggressively) if one considers sarcoptic mange an unusual or unlikely possibility.

Veterinarians usually attempt diagnosis with skin scrapings from multiple areas, which are then examined under a microscope for mites. Sarcoptes, because they may be present in relatively low numbers, and because they are often removed by dogs chewing at themselves, may be difficult to demonstrate. As a result, diagnosis in Sarcoptic mange is often based on symptoms rather than actual confirmation of the presence of mites. A common and simple way of determining if a dog has mange is if it displays what is called a "Pedal-Pinna reflex", which is when the dog moves one of its hind legs in a scratching motion as the ear is being manipulated and scratched gently by the examiner; because the mites proliferate on the ear margins in nearly all cases at some point, this method works over 95% of the time.

It is helpful in cases where all symptoms of mange are present but no mites are observed with a microscope. In some countries, a serologic test is available that may be useful in diagnosis.

### Treatment

Affected dogs need to be isolated from other dogs and their bedding, and places they have occupied must be thoroughly cleaned. Other dogs in contact with a diagnosed case should be evaluated and treated.

There are a number of parasiticial treatments useful in treating canine scabies. Sulfurated lime rinses applied weekly or bi-weekly are effective. Selamectin is licensed for treatment by veterinary prescription in several countries; it is applied as a drip-on directly to the skin. Unlicensed, but frequently used, ivermectin, given by mouth for two to four weekly treatments; this drug is not safe to use on some collie-like herding dogs, however. Other avermectin drugs are also effective, but none is licensed for use on dogs.

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