

Foster & Adopter Sarcoptic Mange Handout

General Description

Sarcoptic mange (aka scabies) is a parasitic skin condition caused by microscopic mites that live just under the surface of an animal's skin.

To Whom is Sarcoptic Mange Contagious?

- **Humans?**
 - Sarcoptic mange can be transmitted to humans.
 - APA! strongly recommends that households with children, elderly, or immunocompromised people do not foster or adopt a pet with sarcoptic mange, as it's more contagious to these people.
- **Animals?**
 - Both domestic and wild animals can contract sarcoptic mange.
 - As with humans, it is very young, very old, or immunocompromised animals that are most vulnerable.
 - All animals should be kept separate.

How is Sarcoptic Mange Spread?

Sarcoptic mange is very contagious and can spread either through direct (skin-to-skin) contact or indirect contact, such as through towels, bedding, carpets, or furniture.

Preventing the Spread of Sarcoptic Mange

The most effective way to prevent the spread of sarcoptic mange is to keep the affected dog/cat away from anything that can't be easily and thoroughly decontaminated, either by cleaning with household disinfectant or running it through the washer and dryer on the hottest setting possible.

Quarantine in the home is highly recommended, and it's a good idea to keep the dog/cat in an area that's easy to clean, like a bathroom. Good hygiene, including frequent hand-washing and changing clothes after handling infected animals can help minimize the potential for infection, though it can't completely eliminate it.

If the resident dog/cat uses Revolution, Bravecto or Nextguard for flea prevention, it greatly reduces the risk of infection.

Diagnosis And Symptoms

Animals with sarcoptic mange will usually be noticeably itchy and have significant hair loss along with lesions or crusty skin.

It is diagnosed by gently scraping the surface of the skin (a procedure called a skin scrape) and then examining the cells under a microscope for mites.

Sometimes a skin scrape will not yield any visible mites, even though it's very likely—based on other symptoms—that the animal has sarcoptic mange. In those cases we will treat the it for the condition and recommend any adopter or foster do the same.

Treatment, Medications, and General Prognosis

Austin Pets Alive! treats sarcoptic mange with one of three medications, depending on what is available; each has a different treatment schedule:

- **Revolution** - Topical application, three doses, given two weeks apart (for dogs and cats).
- **Bravecto** - One oral dose (for dogs).
- **Nextguard** - Once a month for two months (for dogs).

While APA! cannot guarantee how long full recovery will take, in all cases, the dog/cat can be considered non-contagious 2 weeks after the first treatment. If the sarcoptic mange is extreme, treatment can be extended.

Progression & Possible Complications

The main complication from sarcoptic mange is secondary skin infections; dogs and cats with sarcoptic mange will sometimes be prescribed antibiotics to treat or prevent them. A very small percentage of animals can develop more severe infections that require more treatment, but this is uncommon.

It can take awhile for fur to grow back after sarcoptic mange has resolved, but most animals have no lasting issues. Fish oil, medicated baths, and topical treatments can help with itchiness and regrowing fur.

Decontamination/Sanitization

- **Interior**
 - Sarcoptic mites can live for about three days without a host, but can also be killed by standard household disinfectants or by washing and drying any affected fabrics on your washer/dryer's hottest setting.
 - Anything the dog or cat comes into contact with that can't be laundered or thoroughly cleaned should either be placed in plastic for three days or wrapped in plastic and placed in the freezer for at least 12 hours.
- **Exterior (Yards, Patios, etc.)**
 - Patio surfaces or furniture should be cleaned with a household disinfectant.
 - Mites can live in the grass for short periods of time, but the risk of passing it to another animal this way is very low.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What should I do if I start having symptoms of sarcoptic mange?**
 - If you or anyone around you starts to develop itchiness while you have a pet with sarcoptic mange, we recommend seeing a doctor immediately. Although humans can contract the mites from animals, they cannot live on human skin for very long and the infection is much less severe, except in immunocompromised individuals.
- **Can sarcoptic mange reoccur?**
 - Once eradicated, the same case of sarcoptic mange does not occur, though no dog, cat, or person is immune from being affected by it in the future.
- **Are there any long lasting effects of sarcoptic mange?**
 - Generally, no. If a dog or cat has particularly severe hair loss or some scabbing, they could have some lingering cosmetic issues, but there is no threat to their overall health.