

DEMODECTIC MANGE

Demodectic mange is a skin disease caused by a microscopic parasitic mite, *Demodex canis*. Taking a skin scraping and identifying large numbers of the mites under the microscope can easily diagnose the condition. Demodex mites are found in small numbers in the hair follicles of normal dogs. In dogs with demodectic mange, however, these mites proliferate, and large numbers inhabit the skin and hair follicles. Dogs who develop demodectic mange are thought to have less effective immune systems (either because they are very young, genetically predisposed, or have underlying disease processes) that allow the mites to multiply. Demodectic mange is **not** contagious to other pets or people.

Juvenile-onset demodectic mange occurs in dogs less than a year old, and shorthaired breeds are most commonly affected. Adult-onset demodectic mange generally occurs in dogs more than 5 years old and is often associated with other diseases that have suppressed the immune system. Some dogs seem to be genetically predisposed to the generalized form, and breeding these dogs is not recommended.

Demodectic mange may involve only one or two small areas of skin (localized mange) or large areas of the body (generalized mange.) Localized mange is the mildest form. Usually only a few areas of hair loss on the head or front legs occur. Most dogs with the localized form recover completely. Localized mange is usually treated by applying Goodwinol cream to the affected areas daily.

Generalized demodectic mange is serious and often difficult to treat. Large areas of the body may be affected and often these areas are also infected with bacteria. While most of these cases are curable, some can only be controlled, and periodic re-treatment is sometimes necessary. Generalized cases are usually treated with Mitaban dips every 1 to 3 weeks. Mitaban dips can cause side effects such as lethargy and decreased appetite. Dogs who experience side effects from the dips or have severe non-response mange or secondary bacterial skin infections may be prescribed additional oral medications. Dogs with generalized demodectic mange usually require repeated skin scrapings to make sure the condition is resolved before treatment is discontinued.