

## SARCOPTIC MANGE

Sarcoptic mange is a skin disease caused by a parasitic mite, *Sarcoptes scabiei*. It is highly contagious and produces intense itching, reddening of the skin, thinning of the hair and development of crusts and scabs. Secondary bacterial skin infections commonly occur in the inflamed, irritated skin. Sarcoptic mites burrow directly into the skin, where they deposit their eggs. The mites prefer skin with little hair, so they are most numerous on the ears, elbows, abdomen, and hocks. As the disease spreads, hair is lost and eventually the mites can occupy large areas of the skin.

Sarcoptic mange is diagnosed by taking several deep skin scrapings in order to identify the *Sarcoptes* mite under the microscope. In some cases, repeated skin scrapings must be done to try to locate the mites.

Sarcoptic mites are contagious to people and other pets. Any one in close contact with an infected pet who develops skin problems should consult a physician. Other pets in the household should be carefully examined for signs of itching or reddened skin and treated at the first sign of the disease. Though the mites do not survive off the host animal for more than a few days, you should thoroughly clean the environment and use insecticidal sprays on kennels, crates, collars, and grooming tools. Any bedding the infected pet has had contact with should be washed.

Treatment for sarcoptic mange usually consists of a series of ivermectin injections given several weeks apart. Ivermectin is not safe to use in collies and related breeds; in these animals a series of medicated baths and dips are used to treat the infection. In many cases, antibiotics are necessary to treat the secondary bacterial infections that are present, and antihistamines may be used to help control the itching until the infection is under control.