

Zoonotic Disease

Sarcoptic Mange

Zoonotic: diseases that can be transmitted between people and animals.

Sarcoptic Mange



Red fox at rehabilitation center with mange

Mange is caused by the parasitic skin mite, *Sarcoptes scabiei*. Mites cause severe skin itching, scratching can damage skin and in severe cases there can be extensive hair loss. Areas where the mites tend to burrow under the skin include the tips of the ears, elbows, hocks, chest and belly. However, in a severe infestation, mites can cause problems on the animal's entire body. It is contagious and transmitted by direct contact with infected tissue. In humans a related mite causes scabies. Mites can live without a host for 24-36 hours. The mites burrow in the upper layers of skin where they live and lay eggs.

Species affected in the Denver area: red fox, coyote (can be transmitted to dogs, cats, other mammals including humans).

Symptoms: oily skin, crusting on skin, hair loss, crusty ear tips and scab formation. Hair loss and trauma to the skin can be evident. It most commonly affects young animals and can become life threatening to wild animals in cold weather when animals are no longer protected by thick fur. It can be misdiagnosed in pets in the early stages as an allergic reaction, skin scrapings can help determine if the mites are present.

Animal mange is spread by a different mite than the species which causes scabies in humans. Animal mites can cause temporary skin itching and irritation, but should die in a few days. Symptoms in humans include itching and a pimple like rash. There may be tiny blisters and occasionally lesions can appear due to scratching.

Treatment: Under a veterinarians care a sample treatment for a pet could include:

- two double-strength doses of Revolution or Heartguard, spaced two weeks apart for *all pets in the household*.
- Bathing the pet with a permethrin dip.
- Prescribing antibiotics for skin infections
- Vacuuming all carpeting and furniture
- Spraying all carpeting and furniture with a spray containing permethrin
- Washing all blankets and toys in hot water with color-safe bleach, then drying on high heat

People can be treated with prescription scabicides cream or lotion that will kill mites and their eggs. It may or may not need to be reapplied

Mange in Colorado: Mange has recently been identified in red foxes and coyotes in Denver and surrounding counties. Wheatridge, Longmont and Denver have all spotted animals exhibiting the characteristic hair loss. As of January 2011 there has not been significant loss of life in wildlife affected locally.

If you spot a sick animal or animal carcass:

- Keep pets away and monitor their activity when outside
- Do not touch it, feed it or interact in any way
- Call 311 to report

Resources

Veterinary partner <http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&A=1586&S=4&SourceID=61>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/gen_info/faqs.html

University of Northern British Columbia, http://www.unbc.ca/nlui/wildlife_diseases_bc/sarcoptic_mange.htm