



The Best Place to Adopt a Pet



Demodex canis mite



Skin scrape sample with mites and eggs

Demodicosis in Dogs

All normal dogs have a small number of Demodex species mites that live in their hair follicles. These mites are not visible to the naked eye and they are not contagious to people or other dogs. In most dogs, the presence of these mites does not cause any problems but some dogs may develop an overgrowth of these mites, resulting in a condition called *demodicosis*, or *demodectic mange*.

What You May Note

Signs of demodicosis can include hair loss, reddened skin, scabbing, crusting, and sometimes, itching. Localized demodicosis involves only small areas of skin (<5 lesions on one area of the body) on a dog. Generalized demodicosis involves most of a dog's body or paws.

Diagnosis

Demodicosis is diagnosed by microscopically examining samples obtained from deep skin scrapings or hair plucks. To perform a skin scraping, a scalpel blade is used to gently but firmly scrape the skin layers to collect cells and parasites.

Treatment

Most dogs with localized demodicosis don't need to be treated and will self-resolve. Occasionally they may require topical treatment with an antibiotic ointment if there is evidence of secondary bacterial skin infection.

All dogs with generalized demodicosis do require treatment. At HSSV, dogs with generalized demodicosis are treated with oral ivermectin, given daily. Use of ivermectin in dogs for this purpose is off-label (or extra-label). Some dogs, especially herding breed dogs such as collies, shelties, and Old English sheepdogs, may have sensitivity to this drug which can result in neurological side effects. Signs to watch for to indicate ivermectin sensitivity include decreased

activity, excessive drooling, loss of balance or coordination, vomiting, blindness, and seizures. If a dog develops any of these signs while taking ivermectin, it should be discontinued and care sought immediately from a veterinarian. Dogs given ivermectin to treat demodicosis should not be given monthly heartworm preventive containing ivermectin as the active ingredient.

Treatment for demodicosis should be continued until no mites are found on two consecutive skin scrapings performed two to four weeks apart. Some dogs with generalized demodicosis may require treatment for the rest of their lives. Ivermectin is very bitter and can be mixed with some food treats to try to mask the flavor.

Dogs with generalized demodicosis may develop secondary bacterial skin infections that may require topical and/or general antibiotic therapy. Your veterinarian should be informed if you have adopted a dog from HSSV with demodicosis so they can prescribe antibiotics if needed and perform the appropriate follow-up skin scrape testing.

Addendum

Recently, the EPA approved the label claim of a topical flea control medication called Promeris for use to treat demodectic mange in dogs. HSSV has used Promeris successfully to treat dogs with generalized demodex with no observable adverse side effects so far.