FAST FACTS

Acariasis

Mange and Scabies

What is mange and scabies and what causes them?

Mange is a disease caused by tiny microscopic parasites called mites. These organisms infest the skin of affected animals or humans. There are a variety of species of mites. Infestation is also called acariasis (a-K-ah-RYE-a-sis).

Scabies is a type of mange caused by a particular family of mite. Scabies is also the term most commonly used when referring to human cases, while mange is used more commonly for animals. Mites can be host specific or affect a variety of species. Mites cause an extremely itchy, reddened condition of the skin.

What animals get mange and scabies?

Different types of mites infest different species of animals. Scabies and mange can occur in more than 100 species of animals, including birds.

How can my animal get mange or scabies?

All of the mites that cause mange are spread by **direct contact**. The scabies and mange mites are highly contagious (easily spread to other animals or people). Some mites can survive for several days off an animal's body, on clothes, towels, or bedding, so these objects can be a source of infestation.

How does mange and scabies affect my animal?

The most noticeable signs of scabies or mange infestation in animals include severe itching and hair loss. The disease usually starts on the head and on areas of the body with delicate skin such as ears, nose, and elbows. An allergic reaction develops to the mite, leading to intense itching. Small blisters may form and vigorous scratching causes the blisters to open and become covered with scales and scabby plaques that may often ooze fluid. Skin may become thickened.

Can I get mange or scabies?

Yes. People can get mites from infested people or animals by **direct contact**. Human mites generally require prolonged contact to spread. Human-specific mite species (scabies) will require treatment.

Some mite species from infested animals can also transfer to humans. Typically, mites from animals cause an allergic reaction in the skin, resulting in redness, irritation and intense itching. The mites may cause you to itch for several days, but you do not need to be treated with special medication to kill the mites. However, until your pet is successfully treated for mites you may become re-infested and continue to have symptoms.



Left: Dog with mange. Right: Microscopic view of a mite. Photos from CDC Public Health Image Library and The Ohio State University.

Who should I contact, if I suspect mange or scabies?

In Animals –

Contact your veterinarian.

In Humans –

Contact your physician and tell them you have been in contact with an animal with mange.

How can I protect my animal from mange or scabies?

Mites are most often introduced on infested animals. Prevention relies on identifying and treating these animals. Most mites do not survive for long periods off of the animal, but in some cases you may need to treat the animal's environment.

How can I protect myself from mange or scabies?

You can prevent exposure to mites by treating infested pets, livestock, or birds. Gloves, boots and protective clothing can decrease the risk of transmission when handling affected animals. Always wash your hands after having contact with animals.

For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Acariasis at http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/default.htm

CDC website. Scabies at http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/scabies/index.html

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