

Dog Skin Conditions: Demodectic Mange

The cause, symptoms, and treatment of demodectic mange (“red mange”).

Demodectic mange

Photo courtesy David A. Senter, DVM

Cause: Demodex canis, a mite normally found in small numbers on canine skin. If a dog’s immune system isn’t functioning normally, the mites can multiply and cause overt disease (demodectic mange).

Symptoms: In puppies, localized Demodex infection causes small isolated red hairless patches that may itch. Generalized demodicosis causes widespread hair loss and itching, as well as thickened, wrinkled, and scaly skin. Secondary bacterial and yeast infections are common with generalized demodicosis.

Treatment: Localized demodicosis in puppies usually clears up without treatment as the immune system develops. Treatment of generalized demodicosis starts with treating the underlying health condition that allowed the mites to proliferate. The mite infestation is treated with dips and/or oral medication such as ivermectin or milbemycin, along with antibiotics to treat any secondary bacterial infection. Successful treatment may take four months or longer. In some older dogs, demodectic mange can be controlled, but not cured.

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