

Ivermectin Is Cure for Dog's Mange

Several treatments may be needed to rid dog of mange.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. My shelter dog is a Mixed Breed of maybe Border Collie, Bird Dog, etc. He has an irritating itch which leaves red spots. My vet says it is mange and gave him ivermectin. The itching improved, but is back full force. The vet is so expensive and since I am retired, I cannot afford to go back. I bought some liquid ivermectin at the feed store and gave dosages by mouth, but still cannot get rid of it. I have bathed him in Tegrin shampoo to help relieve his scratching. His diet consists of dry O.N.E and canned Alpo, plus tidbits that he might like. Is there anything that I can do to treat this chronic problem?

A. If your veterinarian is correct in his (or her) diagnosis of mange, treatment with ivermectin should be successful.

The only way to diagnose mange, or mites, is through a skin scraping viewed under a microscope. Sometimes several scrapings are necessary to be sure of a diagnosis.

Mange refers to an infestation of microscopic parasites that look something like ticks under a microscope. These spiny, multi-legged creatures burrow under dogs' skin, creating unbearable itchiness, which can drive a dog crazy and lead to severe self-trauma. Mites often are found in wooden sheds, farm buildings and dusty bedding.

Severe infestations can lead to large areas of skin loss, infection redness, and bleeding. Fortunately, mites are species-specific, so they don't jump over onto people. (Lice, a larger parasite, can switch hosts.)

Ivermectin is a powerful anti-parasitic drug that can be given in the injectable or oral form. It may take repeated treatments to completely rid your dog of mites. Border Collies and other Collie-type breeds are especially sensitive to ivermectin, and should never be treated except under a veterinarian's supervision. There are numerous reports of death due to ivermectin toxicity.

Ivermectin intended for use in cattle must be carefully diluted and dosed exactly. The injectable form is usually more expensive. Shampooing your dog in medicated shampoo will help with the itchiness, but will not rid him of the problem.

You might ask your veterinarian if he or she will dispense some syringes of pre-dosed ivermectin to be given at appropriate intervals through an injection under the skin. Hopefully this will allow you to get on top of the problem.