

Hawkins Animal Hospital

SARCOPTIC MANGE

I have been practicing veterinarian medicine for 11 years and in the first nine I had never encountered a case of mange in my patients. In the past 2 years I have treated about 20 cases.

Mange is a skin disease caused by a parasite that burrows in the hair follicles of the skin and results in an extremely itchy condition. Dogs and cats with mange caused by sarcoptes scabiei become itchy, and begin to chew and scratch to the point that they cause scabs and hair loss. It is very easily treated with a series of medications and antibiotics. People can contract mange as well. It is more commonly known as scabies (named after the Latin name of the parasite). In people, it tends to go away on its own, whereas in dogs and cats it does not, until treated.

I believe, that in Milton, the reason for the increase in incidence of mange in pets is a result of all of the housing developments at the perimeter of town. Mange is carried by all mammals, but in this area, mainly coyotes and foxes. The continuing development is disrupting the wildlife and driving it into town. The parasite is deposited on the ground where it is transmitted to our dogs and cats.

If your pet is scratching to the point that it is causing trauma to the skin, you should have your veterinarian examine him or her. It may not be mange, but it warrants investigation.

Next month, I will be discussing **heartworm disease** in dogs and cats.