

Demodex

Demodex canis and *Demodex cati*, known as demodex mites, are microscopic external parasites of both dogs and cats that live either on the animals skin or inside their hair follicles. While demodex mites can affect both dogs and cats, dogs are more commonly affected. Most animals have some demodex mites on their skin at all times just like there is yeast and bacteria always present on the skin. The demodex mites are considered opportunistic parasites meaning that they can live on the animal in harmony until something changes, most commonly being that the immune system of the animal becomes compromised and the demodex mites start to flourish.



The mites start out as six-legged larva and then go through several molts to become eight – legged nymphs and then adults. The development of the mites from egg to adult takes between 20 and 35 days and is done completely on the host animal. Demodex mites are not considered a contagious parasite however newborn puppies tend to contract the mites while nursing on their mothers. After the puppies are about one week of age they have built up enough immunity to no longer allow new mites onto their bodies.

There are two different types of mange associated with demodex mites, localized and generalized. Localized demodectic mange typically looks like isolated scaly bald patches, usually on the animals face and sometimes on the animals' legs and can give the animal a polka-dotted look. Localized demodectic mange is a common puppyhood condition and about 90% of the time resolves without needing treatment. Generalized demodectic mange typically involves the entire animal and produces patchy fur, skin infections, and bald, scaly skin. Generalized demodectic mange also allows for secondary bacterial infections that will typically make the animals' skin itchy and have an odor to it. This type of mange can be seen in older animals with compromised immune systems. Generalized demodectic mange is normally treated with a broad spectrum anti-parasitic medication prescribed by your veterinarian. This treatment can take a several weeks to months depending on how severe the infection is.



While demodex mites are not contagious to people it is important to practice good hygiene while treating your pet for demodectic mange.

For more information please feel free to contact us at (920) 668-6212 or info@cgvet.com.