

Demodex mites in dogs

Overview

- Demodex mites are tiny skin parasites that cause red, crusty, scaly skin and hair loss.
- Demodex infestations tend to focus around the eyes and feet.
- Demodex mite infestations are most common in dogs less than a year old and those with other illness.
- Book an appointment with your vet if you think your dog might have a demodex infestation.

Demodex explained



This puppy is suffering from demodex mites and has dry, crusty lesions all over his body.

Demodex mites are a skin parasite that live on nearly all dogs without causing a problem. They only tend to cause issues in dogs that can't defend themselves against parasites, such as young puppies and dogs with other skin problems or illnesses.

Symptoms

Demodex mites tend to cause problems around the eyes and feet but in severe cases can spread across the whole body. Symptoms include:

- [Dry, scaly, wrinkly skin](#)
- [Hair loss \(alopecia\)](#)
- [Red, crusty skin and rashes](#)
- Greasy coat
- Pus filled spots
- Dark, thickened skin
- [Itching](#) (demodex mites don't cause an itch but itchy skin is likely if it becomes infected)

When to contact your vet

Left untreated, demodex mites can cause severe skin problems, contact your vet for an appointment if your dog has any of the symptoms listed above.

Am I eligible for PDSA veterinary treatment?

Diagnosis

Demodex mites are tiny and can't be seen without a microscope. Unless your dog's symptoms point obviously towards demodex mites, your vet will take a skin scraping (a small sample of your dog's skin) to confirm their diagnosis.

Treatment

Treatment for demodex often includes:

A product to kill the mites

- Usually available as a 'spot-on', tablet, or shampoo.
- Some prescription flea treatments are effective.
- Your dog may need several months of treatment.
- Some dogs, with recurring problems need to continue treatment once their signs have resolved.
- Make sure to finish your dog's treatment to give them the best chance of a complete recovery.

- Unlike many other skin parasites, there is no need to treat the other pets in your household.

Treatment for any other skin problems such as wounds or infections

- If your dog's skin is itchy or very greasy, your vet may advise a soothing and de-greasing shampoo.
- [Antibiotics](#) might be necessary if your dog has a skin infection.

Outlook and ongoing care

Curing a demodex problem can take weeks to months, but fortunately, most dogs respond well to treatment. Some dogs (especially those with an underlying illness) are slow to recover or suffer with recurring problems. If this is the case for your dog, your vet may want to investigate for any underlying problems that might be slowing their recovery.

Once your dog has recovered, check them regularly for returning symptoms.

Cost

Treatment for demodex can become expensive, especially in cases that take months to resolve. Consider [insuring your dog](#) as soon as you get them, before any signs of illness start. This will ensure you have all the support you need to care for them.

It's also very important to speak openly to your vet about your finances, the cost of treatment, as well as what you think is right for your dog. There are often several treatment options so if one doesn't work for you and your pet then the vet may be able to offer another.

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