

The entire life cycle is spent on the host in the hair follicles or sebaceous glands.



*Demodex* is part of the normal skin fauna and is usually present in small numbers in healthy animals.

Adult *Demodex* mite

## **Demodex**

### **Diagnostic Plan**

History  
Physical examination  
Stool analysis

### **Therapeutic Plan**

Dewormers  
Supportive therapy

### **Nutritional Plan**

Nutrition based on individual patient evaluation including body condition and other organ system involvement or disease

## **Demodex**

Your pet has *Demodex* mites. *Demodex* mites are microscopic parasites that live in hair follicles and skin glands. They can cause hair loss and skin infections. *Demodex* infestations are treated with insecticides and antibacterials. This client education sheet will help you learn more about these infestations and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

### **What You Should Know About Demodex**

Puppies and kittens are born without *Demodex* (dem' o-deks) mites, but acquire the parasite from their mothers when they nurse during the first few days of life. In most animals, these mites cause no skin problems; the mites become normal skin inhabitants. Some animals, however, may inherit a susceptibility to *Demodex* mites. Demodicosis, the disease caused by *Demodex* mites, results when the immune, or protective, system in these animals allows mites to proliferate unchecked.

#### **Signs**

Demodicosis is usually a disease of young animals, particularly purebred dogs less than one year old. Veterinarians recognize a localized and a generalized form of demodicosis. Localized demodicosis is characterized by one or more circular, hairless area usually found on an animal's head, neck, or front legs. The skin in these areas may be red or dark.

About 10% of the animals with the localized form of demodicosis later develop the more severe, generalized form. This disease is characterized by patchy, widespread hair loss. The animal's skin may become thicker, develop folds and crusts, change to a reddish or blackish color, and feel greasy. Bacterial skin infections are common and frequently become severe. Scratching is usually present.

## Diagnosis

Demodicosis is usually suspected when a young purebred animal has hairless areas on its face or front legs. Your veterinarian will perform a skin scraping in the exam room. *Demodex* mites can be found when the scrapings are examined under a microscope. Finding large numbers of adult mites, immature forms, and eggs is necessary to establish a diagnosis.

## Treatment and Home Care

Most localized lesions of demodicosis heal with minimal treatment. Generalized demodicosis requires more aggressive long-term therapy. Bacterial skin infections are treated with oral medications, antibiotics, topical ointments, and medicated baths. Insecticidal dips or sponge-on solutions help reduce the skin population of *Demodex* mites. Because of the severity of generalized demodicosis, long-term therapy is frequently required. Your veterinarian will monitor the success of therapy by examining skin scrapings to use whether the *Demodex* mite population has been reduced. Because of the suspected genetic basis of demodicosis, the American College of Veterinary Dermatology suggests that affected dogs and cats not be used for breeding.

## Nutrition Plan

Because generalized demodicosis is a serious and potentially fatal disease, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Nutrition is especially important for optimal growth and proper development of the immune system in young animals. Optimal nutrition should also reduce the health risks associated with feeding excess levels of nutrients such as calcium and phosphorus, which could cause skeletal problems, and excess calories, which could cause obesity. Foods formulated for optimal growth that avoid excess levels of harmful nutrients include Hill's® Science Diet® pet foods.

## Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). However, do not add water to your cat's food. Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet.

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## Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Nutritional Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.