

# Demodectic Mange in Cats

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*Demodex* is a mite that infects both cats and dogs. Demodectic mange, also called demodicosis, is fairly common in dogs, but is much less common in cats. Demodicosis in cats is similar to the disease in the dog, but there are a few important differences including the species of mite, the symptoms, and the treatment of the disease. Those differences will be highlighted here. Because the disease is much more common in dogs a complete overview of the disease can be found in our article '[Demodectic Mange in Dogs](#).'

What are the symptoms and underlying cause of demodicosis in cats?

Demodectic mange in cats may be caused by *Demodex cati* or *D. gatoi*. *D. cati* lives within hair follicles, while *D. gatoi* lives in the outer layer of the skin. Demodectic mange can infect cats of all ages or breeds. It appears to occur in a higher frequency in Burmese and Siamese cats. There are two main forms of the disease: localized and generalized. The localized form is the more common, with symptoms of hair loss with scaly skin on the eyelids, head, ears, and neck of the cat. The lesions may itch (especially if caused by *D. gatoi*) and be red and irritated. The generalized form of the disease has similar lesions, but also affects the body and legs. The generalized form of the disease is often a result of an underlying disease that is suppressing the immune system. Cats that develop generalized demodicosis should be screened for underlying diseases like [feline leukemia](#), infection with [Feline Immunodeficiency Virus](#), [diabetes](#), and other immune-suppressing diseases. A history of corticosteroid use has been found to be a predisposing factor in some cases.



How is demodicosis diagnosed?

The demodex mite in cats can often be found if the veterinarian scrapes the lesion and examines the scrapings under a microscope.

How is demodicosis treated?

Once the mite has been identified, there are several options for treatment. In the localized form, topical [amitraz](#) solution can be applied. Dips containing lime sulfur are very effective. Oral [ivermectin](#) is used by some veterinarians with success against *D. cati*. Many of these products are not approved for use in cats and all treatments must be performed and monitored by a veterinarian. Because *D. gatoi* in cats is so contagious, all cats in the household should be treated.

If a cat develops the generalized form, the veterinarian should perform diagnostic tests to rule out any underlying conditions. Once the underlying disease is identified and being treated, the demodectic lesions may heal on their own.

In some cases, there is a secondary bacterial infection which will need to be treated with antibiotics.

Can I get *Demodex* from my cat?

The various species of *Demodex* mites tend to infest only one species of host animal, i.e., *Demodex cati* infests cats, *Demodex bovis* infests cattle, and *Demodex folliculorum* infests humans.

Summary

Demodicosis is a rare skin disease in cats. However, if your cat suffers from hair loss and itchy skin, particularly around the eyelids and head, *Demodex* needs to be considered as a cause. Once the disease is suspected, it is relatively easy to identify and treat successfully.