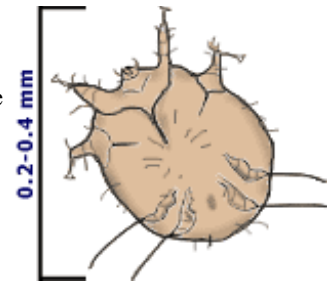


# Feline Scabies (Notoedric Mange) in Cats

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Feline scabies is caused by a tiny mite called *Notoedres cati*. This mite affects cats very much like the sarcoptic mange mite affects dogs; in fact, their life cycles and treatments are very similar. While many cat owners do not realize that cats get mange, as veterinarians, we see and treat this on a regular basis. If your cat suffers from severe itching or hair loss on the head and neck, you should consider having her examined for this mange mite.



What is the life cycle of *Notoedres cati*?

The mites spend their entire life on a cat. The female mite burrows into the skin and lays eggs several times as she continues burrowing. These tunnels can actually reach the length of several centimeters. After she deposits the eggs, the female mite dies. In 3-8 days, the eggs hatch into larvae which have 6 legs. The larvae mature into nymphs which have 8 legs. The nymph then molts into an adult while it is still in the burrow. The adults mate, and the process continues. The entire life cycle requires 2-3 weeks.

Who gets feline scabies?

*Notoedres* can infect cats of all ages, breeds, and colors. It infects both males and females and often will infect an entire litter of kittens. Because this mite is transmitted directly from cat to cat, it is more common in outdoor cats that come in contact with strays. The mite only lives a few days off of the cat, but transmission through grooming, boarding, and sharing bedding is possible. *N. cati* can also infest foxes, dogs and rabbits.

What are the symptoms of feline scabies?

The symptoms usually start with hair loss and itching on the ears and then spreads rapidly to the face, eyelids, and neck. The mites can also spread to the feet and lower abdomen. This characteristic spread probably occurs from the cat's habit of grooming, and sleeping curled up in a ball. As the disease progresses, the skin will become thickened, wrinkled, and covered with grayish/yellow crusts. Because of the intense itching, the infected cat will often scratch and irritate the skin causing secondary infections to develop. The surrounding lymph nodes may also become enlarged as the problem worsens.

How is feline scabies diagnosed?



The characteristic itching and hair loss pattern help to diagnose Notoedric mange in the cat. Skin scrapings are performed to confirm the diagnosis. There are usually a large number of mites present on the skin and the resulting skin scrapings.

How is feline scabies treated?

While the *Notoedres* mite can be killed with many of the same products used to treat dogs with scabies, most of them are NOT safe to use in a cat. Cats are much more sensitive to some of the insecticides that are safe to use in the dog. The current recommended treatment for cats is to clip all long hair and then bathe the cat with a gentle cleansing shampoo. After the shampoo, a 2 to 3% lime sulfur dip (Lymdip) is applied to the entire surface of the cat. Some cats may require a sedative to be properly bathed and treated. This is repeated every seven days until the condition resolves and may require 6 to 8 weeks of treatment.

Some veterinarians have successfully used an [amitraz](#) dip to cure this disease, but this is an off-label use of this product and may make some cats sick. Recently, [ivermectin](#) and [selamectin \(Revolution\)](#) have also been used successfully. These are not approved for use in cats for the treatment of feline scabies, but under close veterinary care, they may provide a viable form of treatment. If there are multiple cats in the household it is often recommended that all cats in the household be treated because they may be harboring the mites.

Unlike allergies, the intense scratching caused by *Notoedres* responds poorly to steroids.

How is feline scabies prevented?

Prevention is best accomplished by preventing your cat from coming in contact with stray or infected cats. Indoor cats are much less likely to contract this disease. Avoid boarding or grooming your cats at locations that do not provide good sanitation and insist that all grooming tools be disinfected between use. At the first signs of infection, seek prompt treatment and isolate the infected cat from other cats in the household.

Can I get *Notoedres* from my cat?

As with other mites in the *Sarcoptes* family, *Notoedres* can infect humans. The disease, though, is generally self-limiting, causing only temporary itching.