

Wildlife Disease Profile: **Mange**

What is MANGE?

Mange is a skin disease in mammals caused by a parasitic mite which burrows under the skin and causes significant irritation to its host. Most commonly, mange affects wild coyotes, foxes and raccoons, though other mammals are susceptible. Two varieties of mange are commonly observed in wildlife populations of Florida, demodectic mange and sarcoptic mange.



Black bear with mange

Demodectic mange has been found in some wildlife, most notably in small populations of the Florida black bear. Demodectic mange mites differ from sarcoptic mange mites in that they occur naturally in hair follicles of many wildlife species, however, demodectic mites can cause an outbreak of mange due to a weakened immune system.

Sarcoptic mange, also known as canine scabies, is the most common type to infect Florida's wildlife. As mites burrow into the skin, the host animal experiences skin inflammation and irritation. Animals with mange scratch their skin, which can eventually lead to hair loss and open wounds or lesions. If the infected animal continues to scratch and re-open lesions, these wounds will often become infected. Secondary infection of open lesions is often the cause of death in individuals with sarcoptic mange.



Coyote - photo courtesy of Maureen Shearer

Mange symptoms in wild animals

Early stages of sarcoptic mange can be difficult to spot, but as the disease progresses, symptoms become apparent. Patchy hair loss and gray, exposed, scabbed skin are clear indicators of an animal infected with mange. These symptoms are due to scratching infected areas, which can lead to open wounds that scab or crust over. In severe cases, the animal will lose all fur and open lesions may be present. In the late stages of the disease, these open lesions are vulnerable to secondary infection that can be fatal.

Mange may cause wildlife to scavenge and depend more on human sources of food. When an animal is weakened by mange, it will often look for an easier meal such as garbage or pet food that has been left out. To avoid conflicts with wildlife, it is important to secure all attractants such as:

- Pet food left outdoors
- Garbage cans or loose garbage
- Fallen fruit
- Bird seed

If these food sources and attractants are removed, wildlife will likely leave the area.

It is critical to NEVER FEED WILDLIFE. Even if an animal looks like it may need help, feeding wildlife is not an appropriate solution and is even illegal for some species such as coyotes, alligators, raccoons, foxes and bears. Feeding can cause wildlife to lose its natural fear of humans and lead to conflicts.

Can my pets get mange?

Although mange is infectious to some mammals, it is usually transmitted through direct contact with an infected individual. Coyotes, being social animals, spend significant time in close contact with each other. Infected parents can introduce mites to an entire litter, which can lead to quick spread of the disease.

Because pets are not typically in direct contact with wildlife, it is unlikely they will be infected. The mange mite does not live long once separated from the host and is not highly mobile. Avoid chance contact with wildlife by keeping pets inside and on leashes when outside. Contact your local veterinarian for further information.

What can be done for infected animals?

Mange is a curable disease but requires specific dosages of medication per individual. Effective treatment requires trapping of infected individuals by professionals. Wildlife rehabilitators may use an anti-parasite medication on captive animals but providing medication to wild populations is not practical because dosages are too difficult to control. [Visit our website to find a licensed wildlife rehabilitator in your area.](#)

Trapping infected wildlife is an option. However, some wildlife species are notoriously difficult to trap. [Visit our website to locate a trapper in your area.](#)

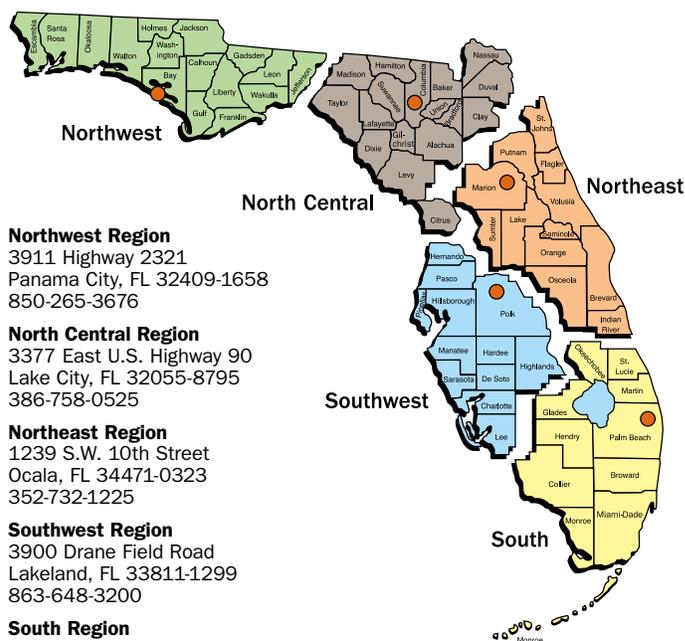
Can people get mange?

Human scabies is caused by mites, but it is a different mite than what's found in canines. Humans cannot contract canine mange. The mite that causes canine mange cannot survive or reproduce on humans. Mites may crawl onto human skin and cause irritation but will die within a few days. Contact your local healthcare provider for more information.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

Regional Offices

If you have further questions or need more help, call your regional Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission office:



Northwest Region
3911 Highway 2321
Panama City, FL 32409-1658
850-265-3676

North Central Region
3377 East U.S. Highway 90
Lake City, FL 32055-8795
386-758-0525

Northeast Region
1239 S.W. 10th Street
Ocala, FL 34471-0323
352-732-1225

Southwest Region
3900 Drane Field Road
Lakeland, FL 33811-1299
863-648-3200

South Region
8535 Northlake Boulevard
West Palm Beach, FL 33412
561-625-5122

