

BASIC INFORMATION

Description and Cause

Notoedres cati (known as *feline scabies*) is a highly contagious mite that primarily infects cats. Dogs, foxes, and rabbits can also be infected. The mite is also contagious to people.

Clinical Signs

Notoedres is a surface-dwelling mite that causes small, red bumps; thickening of the skin; and tightly adherent yellow-gray crusts. Scabs (yellow-gray) and thickened skin first appear on the edges of the ears and rapidly spread to the rest of the ear, face, eyelids, and neck. The feet and the area under the tail may also be affected, and lesions can become widespread.

Intense itching is caused by the mite, and severe scratching by the cat may cause secondary bacterial infections and enlarged lymph nodes.

Diagnostic Tests

Removing scabs with a dull scalpel blade and examining the material under a microscope usually reveals the mite. A skin biopsy can also be used to identify the mite on the surface of the skin.

TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

Treatment Options

All cats in the household are treated. One treatment option involves removing the scabs and debris with a mild shampoo, then applying a 2-3% lime sulfur dip weekly for 6-8 treatments.

Two other therapies are also available, but the drugs have not been approved for this particular condition. Selamectin (*Revolution*) can be applied topically for two applications, 4 weeks apart. Ivermectin is a similar medication that is available for large animals in an injectable form. It can be very effective for *Notoedres* when given in a small dose to a cat. It must be given by our veterinarians every 2 weeks for a total of three shots.

Follow-up Care

The itch and scabs will go away with adequate treatment. If the signs persist, the pet should be re-evaluated, and other pets in the home should also be examined.

Prognosis

Prognosis is very good once the infected cat and all other cats in the house are treated and any secondary bacterial infections are resolved. Rarely, humans can contract this mite, become very itchy, and develop small red bumps. If treatment of the cat does not improve the owner's lesions, the problem should be discussed with the owner's medical provider.