

# *Sarcoptes scabiei*

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## itch mite, mange mite, scabies

**Description:** Itch mites are small and roughly circular. All legs are short. The upper surface has many small triangular scales; females have a large number of spines on this surface.

**Life Cycle:** Females burrow a tunnel in the host animal's skin and lay their eggs. Some larvae remain in the "tunnel" in which they hatched, while others wander over the skin surface before burrowing new tunnels. The entire life cycle is spent on the host.

**Geographic Distribution:** Widespread, particularly where cattle are kept in close quarters.

**Significance:** Scabies is a contagious disease spread by direct and indirect contact and transmissible to humans. The lesions are exudative and the intense pruritis may reduce affected animals' weight gain and result in self-induced lesions. Intense itching and scratching results in dermatitis and exudate that coagulates and dries to form a crust. The skin of affected animals becomes thickened and wrinkled; hair is lost.