

How to Help a Fox or Coyote with Mange

Sarcoptic mange is an infection of the skin caused by a parasitic mite. The most common clinical signs of mange are hair loss, thick skin crusts, and intense itchiness in the infested animal. While any mammal can suffer from mange, at DCHS's Wildlife Center the most commonly admitted animals with Sarcoptic mange are fox and coyote. The mite itself is not deadly, but it creates host of other problems including secondary wounds, infection, starvation, and crusts on eyelids that can lead to vision problems. This condition is treatable and patients often recover quite well with treatment unless the secondary health issues are too severe.

We are happy to treat an animal with mange if it can be captured and brought to the Wildlife Center; however, even with the best of intentions, it can be difficult to contain a fox or coyote. Often the best option is using a live trap, but this does not guarantee success as canids are smart and leery of entering these containers. When a live trap is unable to be used, waiting until the animal is unable to run away is often the only option.

Containing Fox/Coyote with a Live Trap

Wisconsin trapping laws prohibit the public from setting a live trap without a trapper's license, unless the landowner deems an animal a nuisance. Landowners are allowed to trap nuisance animals on their property, and through this loophole the landowner can trap an animal for treatment. Depending on the condition of the animal, during the spring and summer season when many animals have dependent young, DCHS may recommend postponing trapping until late summer or fall once the young have grown. DCHS does not rent out live traps for use with wildlife, but live traps can be purchased from many home improvement stores (Home Depot and Menards) or agriculture supply stores (Blain's Farm and Fleet).

Requirements for setting a live trap:

- 1) Own the land the trap will be placed on.
- 2) Check the trap at least twice a day in summer and every 1-2 hours in the winter.
- 3) Release any non-target animals (feral cats, opossums, raccoon, skunks, etc.) as soon as possible and on the same property where they were trapped.

Trapping is most likely to be successful if the trap is set in a place where the fox or coyote is often seen. We do recommend setting up a feeding station with a trail camera to monitor if the fox or coyote will eat the bait outside of the trap first. If the animal will not eat the food outside of the trap, it is unlikely to enter the trap for the food. Generally we recommend baiting traps with a smelly wet cat or dog food, or cooked chicken with no bones.

The trap should be hidden under natural materials in order to make it look more like a dark hole than a metal container. Set the trap alongside a wall or other object in the area they frequent, cover the trap with a dark colored tarp, then cover the tarp with leaf litter, brush or other natural materials in the area. Place some natural materials on the floor in the front of the trap as well.



Red fox with hair loss and crusted skin typical of mange.



A camouflaged live trap will increase your odds of catching the animal.

If you are able to trap the fox/coyote with mange, please call Dane County Humane Society's Wildlife Center right away at 608-287-3235 to make an appointment. The law allows a member of the public 24 hours to transport a wild animal to a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, but the sooner the animal receives care, the better its chances of successful treatment.

When transporting the animal, it is best to take a few precautions to avoid spreading the mites. Before putting the trapped animal into your vehicle, line the car seat or floor with a tarp, large trash bags, or cardboard. Place the trap on the tarp or other material. If you used a tarp and it is large enough, you can fold that around the trap, or use other disposable materials such as an old towel or sheet to cover the trap. If you are unable to transport the animal and live in Dane County, the Dane County Animal Services Officers may be able to help with the transport and can be contacted at (608) 255-2345. For more information about transporting wildlife once contained, please click [HERE](#).

Containing Fox/Coyote without a Live Trap

Not everyone is able to place a live trap, and because it is so difficult to catch canids in a trap many of our mange patients are caught when they simply become too sick to run away. If you are unable to use live trap, please continue to monitor the fox or coyote in your neighborhood. If their condition declines to the point that they are unable run away when approached and you are in Dane County, please call Dane County Animal Services Officers at (608) 255-2345. If you are outside Dane County, call DCHS's Wildlife Center at 608-287-3235.

Mange Infection and Treatment

Sarcoptic mange mites can infect other species including humans. Mites are host specific however, so while mange mites from foxes and coyotes can affect humans, the infection is self-limiting because the mites will not reproduce on a person. If you are worried about your domestic pets becoming infected, please contact your veterinarian. There are medications available that can be used to prevent infection in domestic animals.

You may have heard or read about "wild treatment" of mangy animals through the use of bait laced with anti-parasitic medications. We do not endorse this method of treatment for several reasons:

1. There is little control over what animal eats the medication in the bait. In order to get a fox or coyote to eat the bait, high value protein sources are used which are also appealing to other wild mammals, birds, and domestic animals such as dogs and cats.
2. The medication frequently used for this treatment, Ivermectin, can cause toxicity issues if eaten by the wrong animal. In particular, there are several breeds of dogs that have a hypersensitivity to Ivermectin. https://www.petmd.com/dog/conditions/toxicity/c_dg_ivermectin_toxicity
3. The use of Ivermectin for treatment of wild fox and coyote is considered off-label usage. Using it to treat in the field in this manner is not allowed by law.

If you have other questions about foxes, coyotes, or mange call DCHS's Wildlife Center at 608-287-3235.