

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 crusting, and intense itchiness in the infested animal. While any mammal can suffer from mange, at DCHS the most commonly admitted animals with Sarcoptic mange are foxes, coyotes, and squirrels. The mite itself is not deadly, but it opens up a pathway for infection, and crusts on eyelids can lead to vision problems. This condition is treatable and patients often recover quite well with treatment unless there are secondary issues from the associated debilitation and starvation.

We are happy to treat a fox if it can be captured and brought to the wildlife center; however, even with the best of intentions, it can be difficult to live trap a fox or coyote. They are smart and leery of entering 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, live traps may 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) Be available to check the trap at least twice a day in summer and every 1-2 hours in the winter.
- 3) Be willing to release any non-target animals (feral cats, opossums, raccoon, skunks, etc.) as soon as possible and on the same property on which they were trapped.

Call us at 608-287-3235 to set up an appointment after you have trapped the fox/coyote with mange.

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 won't 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 the trap look more like a dark hole than a metal trap. 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.

We understand not everyone is able to place a live trap, and because it is so difficult to catch them in a trap, most of our mange patients have simply become so sick they could be caught in a net. Please continue to monitor the fox or coyote in your neighborhood, and if their decline reaches the point that they do not run away when approached we may be able to help contain them using a net or catch pole.



Fox showing the hair loss and crusty skin typical with mange.



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

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.

Sarcoptic mange mites can also infect other species including humans. Mites are host specific, 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.

If you are able to successfully trap an animal with mange, you'll want to take a few precautions for transporting the animal 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. For more information about transporting wildlife once contained, please click [HERE](#).

If you are in **Dane County** and are able to approach a fox that does not run away please call Dane County Animal Services Officers at (608) 255-2345. If you are **outside Dane County** or if you have other questions about foxes, coyotes, or mange feel free to call DCHS's Wildlife Center at 608-287-3235.