

## DEMODEX CLIENT INFORMATION HANDOUT

### University of Georgia, College of Veterinary Medicine

Your dog has been diagnosed with demodicosis. This is an overgrowth of Demodex mites which are normal skin inhabitants, but they are usually so low in number that you cannot tell that they are there. The mites live in hair follicles, and when they overmultiply, they cause hair loss and secondary bacterial infections. Demodicosis is not contagious to other animals or to you. Demodicosis can occur as a localized (< 5 areas affected in one area of the body) or generalized (all over the body or feet) disease. This mite overgrowth may occur because of an immature immune system (such as in puppies), poor nutrition, estrus/heat cycle in females, immune-suppressive medication (such as steroids), or internal disease. Sometimes, no underlying reason can be found. The tendency to be susceptible to generalized demodicosis during puppyhood has been found to be genetically transmitted, therefore affected pups should not be bred, but should be spayed/neutered.

### **TREATMENT:**

The treatment for Demodex depends on the severity of the disease:

1. **Localized Demodex:** 75% of dogs with localized demodicosis will cure the infection on their own with no treatment required. Nevertheless, we often will prescribe local topical treatment with antibacterial benzoyl peroxide or antimite medication.

2. **Generalized Demodex:** There are two main treatment options:

A. Mitaban/Amitraz dips. This is an insecticidal dip which kills the mites. Long-haired dogs need to be clipped to allow the dip to penetrate adequately. The dip is diluted according to label instructions with water and applied over the entire body (do not rinse) once a week until a month past a negative skin scrape (no live or dead mites). The dog should not be bathed or allowed to get wet between dips. A common side effect of the dip is transient sedation/sleepiness, which usually becomes less obvious as time goes on. A rare dog will be very sensitive to the dip and become too sedate/unrousable. If this occurs, wash the dip off and take the dog immediately to the veterinarian to receive an injection of the antidote, a drug called Yohimbine. Alternate therapy for the demodex should then be tried.

B. Ivermectin. This is a large animal deworming medicine and is not licensed for this use in dogs, although it is very effective and usually very safe. This drug cannot be used in herding-breed dogs (Collies, Shelties, Aussies, Old English Sheepdogs, Border Collies), because these breeds are overly sensitive to having adverse side effects. Occasionally, other individual dogs can be sensitive to the medication, with side effects such as dilated pupils, disorientation, and wobbliness. These symptoms usually go away when the drug is stopped. For this reason, we usually start treatment with Ivermectin at a low dose and slowly increase the amount given each day to the effective dose. If a dog shows adverse effects at any time, Ivermectin must be stopped or more serious side effects (coma, death) may develop. The drug is given orally once daily. It is bitter, so some dogs will take it better if it is mixed with a small amount of food to disguise the taste. Unless side effects develop, the daily Ivermectin is given for at least three months, or one month past a negative skin scrape, whichever is longer.

C. Other therapies which have been tried or are in development include daily Milbemycin and Amitraz-impregnated tick collars. Also, dogs who do not respond to the weekly Amitraz dips may respond to daily half-body dips using a higher concentration.

**TREATMENT PLAN FOR YOUR DOG:**

Shampoo therapy: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Antibiotics: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Antimite medication: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other medications: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Your dog should be rechecked in \_\_\_\_\_ weeks for skin scrapes. Treatment will be continued until 1 month past a negative skin scrape (an average of 3-4 months). Do not stop treatment just because your dog looks normal--treated dogs may look normal after several weeks of medication, but they still have mites. If treatment is stopped prematurely, the Demodicosis will recur and may be more difficult to cure.

Please call if you have any questions or concerns: (706) 542-3221

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

