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**ITCHING, REDNESS COULD SIGNAL SCABIES**

Q. What are scabies? I saw a local news report that said to watch out for it around this area because you can catch it from dogs that have it. How do we know if we (or our dogs) have it? And how is it treated? Melinda K., West Milford

A. Dr. Karen Helton-Rhodes, a veterinarian and dermatologist affiliated with the Animal Emergency Referral Center in West Caldwell, suspects this unofficial "mini-outbreak," of scabies originated from squirrels and foxes in the tri-state area. "But it's so contagious we can't really say exactly where it started," she says. "Certainly, dogs can get it any place where animals congregate or become exposed to the wildlife - parks, trails, even boarding kennels, or grooming parlors. And then what happens is they pass it on to their owners, or whomever is near them. "I had three cases just last week. And I'm only here two days a week," says Helton-Rhodes, who described scabies as a microscopic mite. For dogs, it often appears as crusting, redness, and even hair loss on the ears and elbows. For people, Helton-Rhodes says tiny, red bumps usually are found on the inside of the arms, chest, and around the waist. The major symptom for both dogs and people is intense itching. Since some of the symptoms are similar to what occurs with allergies, Helton-Rhodes says in many cases people think they are seeing a recurrence of allergies. "But don't worry, it's easy to get rid of [scabies]. You just have to know that that's what you're getting rid of," she says. "If your pet is scratching, and people in the household are scratching, then there's certainly cause for suspicion. Take the dog to the vet. Then take yourself to your doctor if the vet finds that your dog does have scabies," says Helton-Rhodes. "I would treat the pet with a product called Revolution by Pfizer. It treats everything from heartworm to parasites," she says. "It's a topical solution. Some vets still do the dips or injections, but I think Revolution works just as well, if not better. And it's certainly much simpler for the client."

Letters should be sent to Pet Q & A, The Record, 1 Garret Mountain Plaza, CN 487, West Paterson, N.J. 07424-0487. Send e-mail to [krzeczowski@northjersey.com](mailto:krzeczowski@northjersey.com), or fax questions to (973) 569-7766. Answers will appear only in this column.