

Bulletin Number 11 - August 2007

Mange Symposium

On October 6th the Society is holding a symposium on mange. This symposium will bring together members and others who have been involved in working with wombats with mange. The symposium will consolidate work to date and plan future work on mange.



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When wombats are allowed to suffer from an easily rectified parasitic infestation we as humans are diminished as a species.

The Symposium will bring together people actively involved in the treatment of *Sarcoptes scabiei* (mange) infestations in free living wombats. Other people concerned about wombat welfare are welcome. It will plan treatment protocols, media campaigns and future research.

October 6th 2007
Mange Symposium
Potoroo Palace
Yellowpinch NSW
Phone 02 64 938245 to book and for details

Sample Collection

The Society is sponsoring the collection of samples of mange mites from wombats throughout their range. This is to get samples to analyse the mite DNA and hopefully answer whether these mites derive from the same source (eg, *Sarcoptes* human, canine or swiss (pig) and whether the mites have become host specific. Decisions regarding where the first 25 samples are to be sourced will be made during the symposium. If you are unable to attend and desperately want mites from your region included contact research@wombatprotection.org.au. A collection protocol and collection material will be supplied. This collection is of keratotic plaque or scab NOT tissue so the wombat only needs to donate a bit of scab and can go on its way. This work should allow the determination of the origins of *Sarcoptes* mites on wombats (only human, dog and pig *Sarcoptes* mite subspecies have been scientifically recognised and named) and answer whether mites vary genetically (ie; more than one subspecies could affect wombats) across the various populations.

Mange Information Campaign

The Society is about to launch two posters / handouts about mange. These are Mange, "You Wouldn't Wish It On A Wombat" and "Wombat-National Icon ;Wombat Mange -International Disgrace". They include a space at the back for groups or individuals to include their contact details.

Mange Treatment

Those who treat free living wombats for mange use different products including, Ivomec pour on, Revolution, Cydectin and sulphur / oil so generic instructions for these on the pamphlets / posters are given but the pamphlet can be left blank.

Many wildlife groups continue to shoot wombats with mange as euthanasia without assessing the potential for recovery following treatment. This happens because rehabilitation groups do not have enough members to track and treat wombats with mange or because these groups are unaware of successful treatment protocols. Some still believe mange is an incurable disease not a simple parasitic infestation. Government wildlife information continues to promote the myth that mange is untreatable. The advent of spot on and pour on parasite treatment, now the norm for dogs and cats, means that mange is very treatable and the faster it is seen and treated, the better the outcome for the wombat.

In certain conditions and after time the mite infestation reaches a peak or critical level and the development of keratotic plaques from then on is extremely quick.



These wombats are photographed at monthly intervals. In less than a month one of these wombats was found dead. The second was covered in scab within the same period. The earliest sign was hair loss around the eye. A month on the animal was corrugated and its ears filled with scab.

These wombats could have survived if they had been treated when first photographed, and at that time signs of mange would have been seen by an experienced. One wombat probably got mange from a mother that died and because the joey was young, it may have attached itself to another juvenile (15 kilo) and spread the mites to it as well. Sadly, both these beautiful animals are now dead.

Wombats can and do recover from mange but the longer they remain infested the more opportunistic bacterial infections will affect them. Treatment of wombats with mange who subsequently die confers the additional benefit of killing mites so they don't spread to other animals while giving the wombat a chance to recover and some immediate relief. We recommend treatment in situ above statutory euthanasia.

Mange Fact Sheet 1

Mange is called scabies when it affects humans. It is caused by a mite called sarcoptes scabiei. The female mite tunnels into skin depositing eggs and creates fine hairpin tunnels beneath the skin. This causes intense discomfort and over time thick plaques that look like scabs form over the animal's body. They are dry and draw the skin together. Hair falls out. Cracks become flyblown and infected. In humans and dogs scabies has been or is able to be eradicated fairly easily. In the past wombats were considered vermin so mange which causes a slow and painful death was ignored. Rehabilitation groups tried taking ill wombats into care and bathing them and found they died so many still believe you can't treat a wombat with mange. Many people are not aware that scabies it is a mite infestation not a disease. Some people argue the animal is likely to die any way so should be shot, not treated. The one study on sarcoptes mites in wombats conducted in Australia in 2001 indicated blood changes in wombats with mange. The same study also showed once mites were removed, the wombats fully recovered. (Skerratt 2001). By reading this you now know more about wombat mange than most people. Do not be surprised if you speak to others who are unaware of this information and the success many groups have had in treating wombats with mange. Don't be surprised if a vet suggests the only way to treat mange is by a series of injections. These are not suitable to treating free living wombats but have been used on hand reared wombats because they can tolerate being handled. This pamphlet gives the basics if you want to know more contact the society research@wombatprotection.org.au or the wildlife group listed as your local contact.

There are a number of treatment options and the sooner the wombat gets treated the better. Basic to all treatment modalities;

Don't wet or wash the wombat, leave it where it is if it is safe. Get Support from someone who has treated mange. Make a treatment plan and write it down. Treat by using a spot on or pour on or organic sulphur / oil treatment.

All these treatments can be effective and the one your local contact recommends is described on the back of this card.

In addition CETRIGEN (antibacterial / insecticidal spray) to remove maggots / heal wounds or Terramaycin PINK EYE spray will mark the wombat and give relief.

Monitor and keep in contact.

Default Treatments to Kill Mites

A large wombat weighs 40 kilos, average wombats 30 kilos and small (football size) 15 kilos. If smaller the wombat may need fostercare as well.

Get Advice First If You Can!

CYDECTIN cattle pour or Ivomec pour on at the rate of 1ml per 10 kilo is effective. Available at stockfeed, vets, produce stores. Use in an empty syringe without needle and squirt as close onto the skin as possible. Repeat if possible in a month.

REVOLUTION a spot on for dogs. This comes in pre prepared doses, use the same dose rate and instructions given for dogs. Available from vets/ animal supply stores. Repeat if possible in 30days.

SULPHUR/OIL 10% precipitated sulphur in oil can be brushed on or poured from a container or rubbed in if the animal is captive. Sulphur powder is available from health food shops and chemists, oil can be Neatsfoot Oil (stock supplies) or a light vegetable oil. Treat for as long as possible.

Peeping Pooles!

First our apologies to Charlotte Poole, not Pole as we called her last Bulletin. Charlotte wrote about finding what she described as a “runway” dug by a wombat. One of our Directors, Jenny Bruce, remembered hearing a neighbour tell a story about a wombat digging a similar thing. We were able to speak to the neighbour, Jan Pearson, who told the following story.....

Early one morning I was walking my dogs on a ridge and looked down into the valley clearing below. A wombat ran out into the cleared area and shortly after another came from the bush at the edge. They both proceeded to run around the clearing in circles, with one chasing the other. Every so often the lead wombat, which seemed to be the female, would stop but as soon as the other caught up she'd run off again. This went on for some time and then the male stopped and began digging this long scraping across the ground. Dirt flew everywhere. After he dug up a long track he dug a slightly deeper scraping at one end. The chasing continued but this time when the female ran into where the male had dug, she stopped and crouched in the hollow he had dug on his run way. Jan said she wasn't close enough to observe the details but the male then connected with the female and mating occurred. We have had another member, Belinda Jermyn, from Candelo NSW described wombats chasing each other around a house as a prelude to mating and Marg Wardell from the Murrumbidgee in NSW watched two wombats copulate in the light from her head lights! Marg was under the impression they weren't mounted “doggy” style, but rather at angles on their sides. Jan wasn't close enough to be able to describe exactly what the ones she observed did, but as with Marg, got the impression that the actual act was quite quick! So it appears Charlotte found the wombats' trysting place.

JOEYS' NEWSPAGE

Hello all and welcome to this edition of the Joey's pages. Do you remember Anusha, the silver grey Southern Hairy- Nosed Wombat from Bulletin 8? Bob and Jan tell us she is doing well, despite some set backs. Her friend, Kevin, an Eastern Grey Kangaroo got very sick and died so Bob and Jan have been very sad.

In our last Bulletin, Clare Davis from Victoria was trying to find out whether other people had seen albino wombats. This led some of you to wonder whether Clare's wombats had red eyes like albino rats. We'll let you know next time. In the mean time try and find out whether all albinos have red eyes.

Jake and Jarred Wynan have made a video called Ken's Valley have given the society their videos to sell on DVD. The Society makes some money from each DVD sold and we'll use this to buy medicine to treat wombats who have mange. The boys are going to save up to buy a camera so they can film wombats at night.

The Society met Jake and Jarred and their mum and dad at a wombat training day. Wombat training days aren't like dog training days. On wombat training days the people get taught how to care for wombats.