

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES ON CANINE MANGE IN SRI LANKA

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Mange is a widespread but often neglected parasitic skin condition caused by *Sarcoptes scabiei* and *Demodex canis* mites. This study aimed to evaluate community knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) regarding mange and identify factors influencing them. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling, covering respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and details of their knowledge, perceptions, and practices on mange management. Chi-square or Fisher's exact tests were applied to analyse associations between sociodemographic factors and respondents' knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Information was obtained from 150 questionnaires across 11 districts with a participation of mostly young adults aged 18 – 30 (63.8%) and predominantly females (60.7%). Majority of the respondents (78.6%) were dog owners, and among non-owners, 73.1% previously owned dogs. Dogs were mostly kept outdoors; where 20.7% of dogs were exclusively outdoors, 33.3% were outdoors most of the time, 30.0% were occasionally outdoors, 12.0% were rarely outdoors, and only 4.0% were never kept outdoors. Only 39.3% of participants accurately answered > 50% of knowledge-related questions and demonstrated sufficient knowledge on characteristics and diagnosis of mange. There were no significant associations between knowledge and education ($\chi^2 = 0.258, p = 0.879$), dog ownership ($\chi^2 = 1.529, p = 0.216$), or respondent age ($\chi^2 = 2.011, p = 0.366$). Of the respondents, 58.0% gave acceptable responses on satisfactory mange-related practices for more than 50% of questions on practices. No significant association was found between practices and sociodemographic variables. Most respondents (94.0%) expressed positive attitudes emphasising the importance of public awareness about mange and its treatment. Open-ended responses highlighted reliance on home remedies, such as neem-based products, vinegar, coconut oil, mothballs and commercial treatments like dog shampoo. The importance of caring for street dogs was also emphasised. This study underscores the need for awareness programs and despite knowledge gaps and inconsistent practices, there is willingness to support educational initiatives that lead towards dog welfare.

Keywords: Community perceptions, Dog mange, Public awareness, Questionnaire survey