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EQUINE SARCOIDS

What are they?

Sarcoids are tumours that grow exclusively on horses. They are not malignant and so do not spread to other areas of the body but they can be locally invasive. They tend to occur in areas that have been traumatized in the past such as under tack equipment, or on thin skin such as around the eyes, muzzle and under the belly.

There are many different types of sarcoids; some appear as hairless scaly patches, some are wart-like, some appear as a circular lump under the skin and others can resemble proud flesh. Their rate of growth varies from very slow to very fast growing.



Varied appearances of equine sarcoids

How are sarcoids diagnosed?

Diagnosis is usually based on appearance alone as taking a biopsy may cause the sarcoid to grow rapidly. However if the sarcoid is small and can be removed in its entirety it can be sent to a lab for analysis.

How are sarcoids treated?

Depending on the type and location of the sarcoid; small, slow growing lumps that are not causing a problem are often best left alone. Fast growing lumps in a problem location such as on the girth or around the eye will require treatment. There are many sarcoid treatments

available; the best treatment is surgical removal with large margins but in some locations this is not possible. Alternatives include cryotherapy (repeated freezing treatments) or the use of special creams which kill the tumour tissue. Owners need to wear protective equipment when using these creams. Other options include radiation or chemotherapy. Whichever treatment is chosen, unfortunately tumour recurrence is common.

How can I prevent sarcoids on my horse?

It is possible that sarcoids can be transmitted to other horses or to other locations on the same horse by biting flies, so fly control is an important control measure.