



Sarcoids

Sarcoids are the most common skin tumour of horses and occur in all equid species all over the globe. Sarcoids are benign skin tumours, in that they do not metastasise to internal organs, though it is frequently noted that certain horses get sarcoids when other horses don't, and once a horse has sarcoids they are more likely to develop more in the future.

Common sites for sarcoids include the inner thighs and groin, sheath, ventrum, axillae (arm pits) and face (particularly around the eyes). The cause of sarcoids is unknown as of yet and there is no one single treatment that is 100% effective. If traumatised, all sarcoids have the potential to progress rapidly into more serious forms such as the fibroblastic or malevolent form. There are six different types of sarcoids:

Occult

Occult sarcoids are flat, roughly circular areas of skin with no or thinning/little hair. These sarcoids are very easy to miss and are sometimes mistaken for tack/rug rubs or ringworm. Other types of sarcoid can also present with an occult margin (a ring of occult sarcoid surrounding a different sarcoid type).



Verrucose

Verrucous sarcoids are relatively flat and wart-like and may be single lesions or multiple lesions grouped together. They can appear rough to the touch.

Nodular

Nodular sarcoids are firm, usually round, hard lumps that are firmly attached to underlying skin or freely moveable beneath the skin surface. They usually have a smooth surface, though the surface may also ulcerate and this carries an increased likelihood of transformation into a more severe type of sarcoid.



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Fibroblastic

This is an aggressive type of sarcoid that can grow very quickly. Fibroblastic sarcoids are often fleshy, ulcerated and bleeding. They may look like exuberant granulation tissue (proud flesh) with a thickened surface. They can develop from wounds and can also develop from other types of sarcoid (eg, nodular).



Malevolent

This is the most aggressive of all sarcoid types and is very difficult to treat. Malevolent sarcoids can spread very rapidly and cover a large area of the body. This sarcoid type is, thankfully, rare.



Mixed

Mixed sarcoids are just that - sarcoids of mixed types!

Treatment

Treatment of sarcoids depends on the individual horse and the type, size and location of the lesion(s). Sometimes you may be advised to leave it alone and monitor it (some sarcoids remain the same size for years and don't seem to cause any issues) and other times you may be advised that treatment is necessary. Treatment options include laser surgery, AW4-LUDES cream and laser surgery in combination with radiation therapy (usually for certain types or locations of sarcoid).

Unfortunately no sarcoid treatment can 100% guarantee that the sarcoid will not recur, nor can it guarantee that your horse will not have additional sarcoids in the future. We recommend a veterinary examination for all sarcoids to advise you on the best course of action for your horse.

Please contact us if you would like more information.