

MAY NEWSLETTER

Common Equine skin growths.

There seems to be quite a lot of confusion surrounding some common conditions. We will go through four separate disease entities and give a brief explanation and summary. For a more comprehensive explanation please get in touch with one of the equine vets.

Warts

These are caused by a papillomavirus. They are benign viral tumour. They look disfiguring and the most common area is around the muzzle. The horse develops an immunity over time (normally between 3 and 9 months) after which time the warts will just fall off. There are many proposed remedies, but in our experience time is the best healer.

Melanoma

Equine melanoma in gray horses is not to be confused with the melanoma that humans get. It is a benign accumulation of the cells that produce melanin, the black pigment. These are not tumours. They are nearly always best left alone, and only tend to cause problems as a by product of their anatomical position and how they may affect the function of the surrounding structures. Many different miracle cures have been proposed over the years. However in our experience of they are not bothering the horse they are best viewed as a cosmetic problem only.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma

These are skin tumours that are predominantly found on white/non pigmented areas of skin and sometimes on the membrana nictitans (third eyelid). They are locally invasive and can be quite aggressive. Treatment may be medical and/or surgical and will depend on the size and location of the lesion. The best thing to do is prevent the problem arising. As these are instigated by overexposure to sunlight a good quality sunblock applied to non pigmented and sparsely haired parts of the skin. Most commonly the muzzle and periorbital areas.

Equine Sarcoid

This is a complex problem. Thought to be caused by a bovine papillomavirus and transferred between horses by flies who have landed on a affected horse and transfer to another by landing on and being round a skin wound. The presentation is varied. Anything from a change in texture to the skin and overlying hair coat, to nodules, large wart type lesions and ulcerated masses. Individual animals will have varying susceptibility and immunity. It is important to understand that these are tumours that need assessing and managing. A recent study of a large number of horses in France found that more than 60% regressed with time with no interference. With the knowledge that every time a sarcoid is interfered with chances of successful management reduce by approximately 40% it is our feeling that a considered approach is best. Surgical debulking and local chemotherapy is the preferred option for those that require treatment. The prognosis is worse for a sarcoid in the periorbital area, and between the thighs. This is a huge subject and we are just scratching the surface here.

Please let us know if we can help any further with any of the information above.

Stay dry!

Tim and Paul.



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HELPFUL HINT 4 HORSES



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