

Equine Skin Tumors

The most common form of cancer in the horse is skin cancer. There are generally three kinds 1) sarcoid 2) squamous cell carcinoma 3) melanoma.

Sarcoids are more common in younger horses. They can occur as a single nodule or multiple lesions any place on the body. They can even occur as simple hair loss and crusting. Common places include legs, groin, ears, eyes, lips and behind elbows.

Squamous cell carcinomas are malignant. They appear at mucus membrane junctions—eyelids, lip, nose & genital region.

Melanomas are most common in white or gray horses. They frequently occur around the tail and anal area, ears, eyes and genital region.

Regardless of the type of skin tumor, early detection and treatment are crucial. Observe your horse closely on a regular basis and have a veterinarian examine any suspicious lesions. Check them over even during the winter months with their thick hair coat. Changes in skin that should be examined include discoloration, roughening, crusting, scaling or hair loss.

Treatment options that we offer include surgical excision, cryosurgery (freezing with liquid nitrogen), laser photo vaporization, immunotherapy or local injection chemotherapy.

Larger tumors that have invaded deep into local tissues are more difficult and expensive to treat. The chances for complete recovery are better the sooner the problem is detected and treated.

