

Sarcoids are the most common skin tumour found in horses. They can be found in horses of any breed, gender and age. They are a form of skin cancer and can only affect the skin and do not spread to internal organs.

The most common sites for sarcoids:

- Axilla ('armpit' of the front leg)
- Groin
- Face
- Scrotum
- Sheath

There is currently no evidence to suggest that sarcoids are able to be transmitted to other horses via horse-to-horse contact.

Sarcoids behave differently on different horses. Some cases remain unchanged for years and others change rapidly, they are unpredictable.

There are six recognized forms:

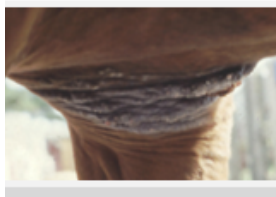


Occult

Roughly circular hairless areas of skin.

Fibroblastic

Fleshy masses, they bleed easily, often ulcerated surface and can be extensive.



Verrucose

'Wart-like' in appearance and greyish in colour.

Mixed

More than one form of sarcoid in a single lesion.



Nodular

Firm, round nodules under the skin. Can be singular or multiple and of varying sizes.

Malignant

Rare. Most aggressive and can rapidly spread.



Treatment

- Effective treatment is more likely if lesions are treated early.
- You should not expect a 100% cure rate. Recurrence of lesions can occur.
- Only your vet should prescribe a treatment protocol after clinical assessment.

There is no universal best treatment for sarcoids. Therefore, there are multiple treatment protocols for sarcoids including, sharp or laser excision, cryosurgery, topical or intratumoural chemotherapy and immunotherapy.

In most cases we will treat the sarcoids either topically or by laser removal.

- **Topical** – A heavy metal-based cream (called AW4-LUDES) is the most commonly used cream in practice. It can only be prescribed and applied by a vet. It shows good results with mild side effects such as swelling at the site and mild discomfort. Pain killers can be given during treatment.
- **Laser excision** – Use of a laser minimises both bleeding and potential 'seeding' of tumour cells. In some cases a general anaesthetic may be required depending on the location and severity of the sarcoids.



Sensible precautions include **good fly control**, especially for horses with sarcoid lesions, and **good wound management** as sarcoids can grow rapidly at wound sites.