

VET DIARY



OUR EXPERT

Nicola Thompson is a qualified vet who works for Wright & Moreton in Cheshire, a member practice of XL Equine. She has ridden since she was a child.

Lumps and bumps

Our vet columnist Nicola Thompson offers advice on what to do if you discover a lump on your horse

I wanted to write about lumps and bumps this month as they are commonly seen on horses and ponies and can be an alarming find for owners.

The good news is that in most cases they are not a cause for concern. For example, a bump could be a fly bite, which will go down after a day or two.

However, others may be more serious, including sarcoids – a type of skin tumour which has many forms and can appear in a number of sites on a horse's body.

Common locations are the eyes, groin area and behind the elbows, but they can develop pretty much anywhere.

The types of sarcoid are occult, verrucous, nodular, fibroblastic and malignant, or a mix. The terms are used to describe their appearance by vets and can help to decide what treatment is to be given.

Whatever type they are, the tumours need veterinary attention as they can get worse and become ulcerated if left untreated.

Also, the bigger a sarcoid gets, often the harder it is to treat.

At Wright & Morten we often use laser surgery to remove sarcoids and achieve good results. We sometimes

inject chemotherapy drugs or use creams designed to kill tumour cells.

Treating Tia

A recent case I saw with sarcoids was Tia, a six-year-old Thoroughbred mare who had several nodular tumours in her groin area.

She wasn't overly happy with anyone touching the area, which made cream application or injection into the sarcoids



They occur mainly in greys and are often seen under the tail.

Melanomas don't always cause a problem but if they get too large or are interfering in

“If you find a lump on your horse, it is best to get it checked out by a vet”

difficult. We decided due to the type and location that laser surgery would be her best option.

Tia was brought along to our next laser clinic and was given a short anaesthetic before having treatment.

We took wide margins around the tumours to help prevent regrowth, which can occur if tumour cells are left in place.

She recovered well and we monitored her wounds over the next six weeks.

Initially, laser surgery wounds produce a lot of yellow discharge and they are left open, not sutured closed. Over time, though, Tia's wounds healed and she returned to work.

Tia will always be at risk of developing more sarcoids and some horses get many over their lives, while others only have a few.

But all are worth having a vet out to check them and usually we advise treatment to get the best outcome.

Other skin problems

Melanomas are another common tumour that we see – they are usually dark coloured lumps with hair loss over them.

the horse's life we can use chemotherapy or remove them surgically.

Less serious lumps include insect bite reactions and scar tissue from old wounds.

Warts are only common in young horses and look similar to sarcoids.

Some resolve with time but it can be hard to differentiate them from the more serious lumps and bumps – even a vet may need to run a test before knowing what they are.

We will sometimes remove the lump in order to get it tested.

The general advice is that if you find a lump on your horse, especially if it's bleeding or painful, it's best to get it checked by a vet.

Also, any lump that doesn't go down fairly quickly should be checked. We always stand a better chance of treating a horse if it's assessed early. ■

Next issue: Our regular columnist Nicola shares how she worked with the fire brigade to free a horse that had become stuck in a bog.



Tia had several sarcoids in her groin area