

Sarcoids

Sarcoids - or skin tumours - are a common problem in the horse. Appearing primarily on legs, heads and flanks, they resemble small warts at first, but grow rapidly and ulcerate; after removal, they tend to recur and may bleed. Treatment is unreliable and often ineffective.

Current evidence suggests that equine sarcoids are caused by a virus, the bovine papillomavirus or cattle wart virus. However, little is known about the overall disease process.

With Levy Board funding over the next 3 years, the first definitive study of the disease process will be undertaken by Professor Saveria Campo, Professor Sandy Love and Dr Lubna Nasir of Glasgow University Veterinary School. Specifically, they will examine; the role of bovine papillomavirus genes in the development and formation of sarcoids; the horse's immune response to infection; the relationship between sub-types of the virus; and the clinical manifestation of sarcoids.

This overdue research is an essential step towards the prevention of sarcoids and the development of more effective treatments. For example, increased understanding of the role of the cattle wart virus in the disease, and the horse's immune response to infection, are crucial as a basis for the development of vaccines against this equine skin tumour.