

Equine Eosinophilic Collagenolytic Granuloma / Nodular Necrobiosis

By Erinn Hilberry, DVM

What is it?

Equine Eosinophilic Collagenolytic Granuloma is a common equine skin condition. This skin condition typically appears in the form of non-itchy, firm, round, raised nodules on the skin of horses. The hair over the nodules is completely normal. They can be located anywhere on the body but are found most commonly on the withers, back and neck. These nodules may be present in a variety of sizes ranging from a few millimeters to 10 cm in diameter. Over time, the nodules may become mineralized and hardened. Eosinophilic Collagenolytic Granulomas have been reported to occur more commonly in the warm spring and summer months, but they may be present year round. The nodules are usually not painful. However, if they are located in an area where they contact the saddle they can become sore and irritated. The actual cause of Eosinophilic Collagenolytic Granulomas is unknown. There is some evidence that these lumps are a type of hypersensitivity (allergic) reaction to insect bites, especially mosquitoes. However, they have been reported to occur spontaneously as a result of trauma or from imbedded hairs.

Diagnosis

Your veterinarian may diagnosis Eosinophilic Collagenolytic Granuloma on your horse by fine needle aspirate (FNA) or by skin biopsy. An FNA can be performed on the farm. This is done by inserting a needle into the lump and collecting cells. The cells are then smeared onto a slide and viewed under a microscope. Horse eosinophils are highly distinctive. They are easily recognizable by the large magenta pink granules they contain. Eosinophils are a special type of white blood cell that is produced by the body for specific functions. They are important in allergic reactions and are used to fight parasites.

Treatment

Single Eosinophilic Collagenolytic Granulomas may not require treatment. Nodules that are located under the saddle or other uncomfortable areas should be treated or removed if they are problematic. Your veterinarian may treat the nodules by injecting them with a steroid or by surgical excision. Usually only solitary nodules are surgically removed. There is a limit to the quantity of steroid that can be injected safely without risking the development of laminitis. If there are a lot of nodules then other treatment options should be considered. Oral steroids may be helpful in treating a horse that has nodules covering a large region of their body. Your veterinarian may prescribe a tapering dose of oral steroids for your horse until the nodules have resolved. Mineralized nodules can only be removed surgically. If your horse has hypersensitivity to certain insects then hyposensitization or allergy shots may be helpful. As always, limiting your horse's contact with biting insects by using fans, fly sheets and a good insect management system will be beneficial.

If you think your horse may have Eosinophilic Collagenolytic Granulomas contact your local veterinarian.

Contact Brandon Equine Medical Center at 813-643-7177 or email info@brandonequine.com with any questions regarding this topic.

This article originally appeared in Horse & Pony magazine in July 2013 and is reprinted with their permission.