

BASICS

Fibromas are fleshy, wart-like growths confined to the skin of animals. They vary in texture (smooth or roughened), size (10mm to 100mm), and color (gray, black, or tan).

Fibromas are caused by **POXVIRUSES AND PAPILLOMA VIRUSES** which are specific to wildlife species. Fibromas can occur on any part of the body but are usually found on the heads and legs of animals.

Fibromas can affect an animal's vision, feeding, breathing, and movement, depending on their size and location. In addition, abrasions on fibromas can lead to **SECONDARY BACTERIAL INFECTIONS**.

The growths are generally **SELF-LIMITING** and regress on their own as infected animals mount an immune response. However, in immunocompromised animals, fibromas may progress and invade internal organs.

Fibroma viruses are typically **TRANSMITTED** by insect vectors, such as fleas and mosquitoes, and direct contact with injured skin.

DIAGNOSIS is usually done on the basis of visible lesions. Confirmation can be done with histology and isolation of the virus.

There is **NO TREATMENT** for fibromas. Management of fibromas is not warranted, because there is little impact on populations of wildlife species.

Because the viruses that cause fibromas are species specific, wildlife fibromas are **NOT TRANSMISSIBLE TO HUMANS**.

Carcasses with fibromas are safe for **HUMAN CONSUMPTION** if the growths are confined to the skin, and there is no evidence of secondary infections.



**DEER,
SQUIRRELS,
& RABBITS**



**INSECT
VECTORS
& DIRECT
CONTACT**

DETAILS

In **RABBITS**, fibromas are caused by a poxvirus known as the **SHOPE FIBROMA VIRUS**. Local outbreaks of fibromas commonly occur in eastern cottontail rabbits in the eastern and Midwestern United States.



Rabbit with Shope Fibroma Virus, with horn-like growths protruding from the mouth and ears.
By WD45 - Flickr, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia>.

In **SQUIRRELS**, fibromas are caused by the squirrel poxvirus and occur in gray and fox squirrels, as well as woodchucks. Biting insects are the most common mode of **TRANSMISSION** in squirrels. In addition, the virus can be transmitted from mother squirrels to nursing young. Occasionally, outbreaks may cause **HIGH RATES OF MORTALITY** among affected squirrel populations. Squirrel pox has been reported in eastern and Midwestern states.



Eastern gray squirrel submitted to the Wildlife Health Program for necropsy. The cause of death was septicemia secondary to a severe case of fibromatosis.

In **DEER**, fibromas are caused by papilloma and poxviruses and are seen in white-tailed deer and mule deer across the United States. Moose are also susceptible. **TRANSMISSION** of deer fibroma viruses is primarily through direct contact of broken skin with infectious viruses as deer rub against each other or vegetation. Fibromas are more commonly seen in male deer suggesting that fighting may play a role in transmission of the virus. Biting insects are also a common mode of virus transmission in deer.



White-tailed deer with different degrees of fibromas on head and ears.

Left: Image taken by Wildlife Health Program staff.

Below: Image provided by the public to the Wildlife Health Program.

