

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS..... I

SUMMARY..... II

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG..... IV

1. Introduction..... 1

 1.1. The equine malignant melanoma 1

 1.1.1. Tumor classification 2

 1.1.2. Etiology..... 2

 1.1.3. Gross pathology and diagnosis 3

 1.1.4. Clinical signs in diseased horses..... 3

 1.1.5. Current treatment options 4

 1.2. The equine sarcoid: an overview..... 5

 1.3. Topical drug application 5

 1.3.1. Why the topical (epicutaneous) approach to treat equine skin cancer? 5

 1.3.2. Drug transport across the skin 6

 1.4. Naturally occurring substances in plane bark and their synthetically modified derivatives 7

 1.4.1. Betulinic acid 8

 1.4.2. Betulinic acid derivative NVX-207 9

 1.4.3. Betulin derivative betuliny-l-bis-sulfamate 9

 1.5. Hypotheses and aims of the thesis 10

2. Manuscript I: Betulinic acid shows anticancer activity against equine melanoma cells and permeates isolated equine skin *in vitro*..... 13

 2.1. Supplemental data 23

3. Manuscript II: *In vitro* assessment of triterpenoids NVX-207 and betuliny-l-bis-sulfamate as a topical treatment for equine skin cancer 25

4. Manuscript III: Concentration profiles and safety of topically applied betulinic acid and NVX-207 in eight healthy horses – A randomized, blinded, placebo-controlled, crossover pilot study	49
5. Manuscript IV: Effects of topically applied betulinic acid and NVX-207 on early stage equine melanoma – A prospective, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled pilot study	63
6. General discussion	85
6.1. Summarized findings	85
6.2. Interpretation of the findings.....	85
6.2.1. <i>In vitro</i> cell culture experiments	86
6.2.2. <i>In vitro</i> permeation studies	89
6.2.3. <i>In vivo</i> safety and permeation studies	91
6.2.4. <i>In vivo</i> efficacy study	94
7. Major findings and conclusions.....	101
8. Future perspectives.....	103
9. References.....	105
Affidavit.....	117
Acknowledgements	119