

EQUINE CASTRATION INFORMATION



Castration is the surgical removal of a horse's testicles. The procedure is performed under short acting general anaesthesia with sterile instruments and aseptic surgical preparation techniques.

The surgical incision is left open (not sutured) to facilitate drainage and healing. At the time of the procedure anti-inflammatories are administered to increase comfort after castration.

A recently castrated gelding can still get a mare in foal for some time after castration because of sperm remaining in the conducting system. It is recommended to keep recently castrated geldings away from females for 30 days.

DETAILS OF PROCEDURE

Location of procedure: The castration will need to be performed in a safe location that is clean, dry, and dust-free. Ensure that other animals are a distance away and not able to enter the working zone.

Post-operative living environment: After the surgery, your horse will need to be housed in a clean, dry, and dust-free environment, preferably a medium-large paddock where he can actively move around. A grassed paddock is ideal.

Supervision: Your horse will need to be monitored closely after surgery to ensure he is healing well and there are no post-operative complications. He should be checked several times per day for the first 48 hours after surgery, then at least twice daily for the first few weeks. Ensure you have someone available and suitably experienced to do so.

Risks and complications

While castration is a very common procedure, as with all surgical procedures there are some potentially serious complications associated with castration in horses. Our veterinarians take every precaution to ensure the procedure is carried out as safely as possible for your horse. However, it must be acknowledged that any procedure involving horses, especially young, unhandled, or fractious animals can result in accidentally injury to the horse.

Sedation / Anaesthetic: Occasionally despite all precautions, horses can suffer complications when they undergo sedation and/or anaesthesia. Horses that may be more susceptible to complications are very young, older horses, those with an excitable temperament or suffering from disease or injury. However, they can also happen to any horse, including those which appear fit and healthy prior to anaesthesia.

- Allergic Reaction: horses can have an allergic reaction to **any** medication they receive – the extent of the reaction can range from mild skin irritation through to collapse, anaphylaxis, and death.
- Collapse: individual horses may be more sensitive than expected to the sedative drugs used and may stumble / fall when sedated. This could result in injury to the horse.
- Excitement: Sedative drugs can occasionally result in mild muscle trembling through to frenzied, uncontrollable activity and severe injury.
- Injury: due to their size and temperament, horses can injure themselves during an anaesthetic procedure. It most commonly occurs during recovery when a horse attempts to stand while it is still under the effects of the anaesthetic drugs and is uncoordinated.

Bleeding: There is likely to be some bleeding from the surgical site for up to 48 hours after surgery. It should be no more than a slow drip – any bleeding faster than this requires urgent veterinary attention.

Swelling / Infection: A small amount of swelling around the prepuce and surgery site is normal, however it should be monitored closely. The surgical site is left open to facilitate drainage and healing - if the incision closes prematurely then infection can be sealed inside. If the scrotal area swells to more than 2 times its pre-surgical size, and/or your horse's rectal temperature exceeds 38.5 C, infection should be suspected, and veterinary attention is required.

Herniation / Evisceration: In some horses the opening of the abdominal wall (inguinal canal) through which the testicles descend into the scrotum, is abnormally large or flexible. In these horses, the internal abdominal tissue or bowel can pass through the inguinal opening (herniation) and / or the castration wound (evisceration). This is a serious complication and requires urgent veterinary attention.

CONTACT THE HOSPITAL IMMEDIATELY IF:

- You have any questions
- Your horse is depressed, lame or will not eat after the procedure - He should always maintain a good appetite and attitude.
- You observe excessive swelling of the scrotum or sheath (>2 times pre-surgical size)
- Horse's temperature is >38.5°C
- You observe more than a slow drip of blood or any abnormal drainage from the scrotal incision.
- You observe any pink or red material hanging from the surgical site.