



Castration

Preventative
Health Care

24 Hour
Emergency
Ambulatory Care

Dentistry

Pre-Purchase
Exams

Lameness

General Information:

Castration involves surgical removal of the testicles. It is performed on colts to modify their behavior and to prevent development of stallion-like body characteristics.

Castration is usually performed before the age of 18 months. Any colt older than 9 months of age should not be put on pasture with the fillies and mare if you do not want foals by that colt.

- In normal colts, the testicles have descended into the scrotum by birth.
- In some colts, called “high flankers”, one testicle does not completely descend into the scrotum and remains in the inguinal canal. As the testicle grows in size from birth, it becomes easier to surgically remove.
- Testicles that remain in the abdominal cavity, without descending into the scrotum, require horses to be under general anesthesia for removal. This surgery is preferably performed laproscopically. These colts are known as cryptorchids.
- Before surgery, the colt should be halter broken and accustomed to handling so he can be easily managed during and after surgery.
- Tetanus immunization is necessary before castration.

Potential Complications of Castration:

Though castration is a common surgical procedure, complications can develop after surgery. It is nearly impossible to predict if postoperative complications will occur.

Bleeding

Bleeding can occur after castration of a horse with a clotting abnormality or a horse with abnormally large testicular blood vessels. The testicular blood vessels enlarge as a stallion ages. Thus, the younger the horse is castrated the less potential for postoperative bleeding. If the horse is over 2 years of age at the time of castration, control of bleeding is a greater concern.

Inguinal Hernia

In some horses, the opening in the abdominal wall (inguinal canal) through which the testicles descend into the scrotum is abnormally large or flexible. In these horses, the intestines and other abdominal tissue can pass through the inguinal opening resulting in a hernia. Though inguinal hernias are uncommon, they are a serious complication.

Infection

After the testicles are removed, the scrotal incision is not sutured and is allowed to heal from the inside out. If the incision closes prematurely, infection can be sealed inside. If the scrotal area swells to approximately 4 times its pre-surgical size or if your horse’s rectal temperature exceeds 102.5° F, infection should be suspected. The aftercare instructions outlined below should help prevent infection.

Pregnancy

A recently castrated gelding can still impregnate a mare for some time after the castration because of sperm remaining in the conducting system. A recently castrated gelding should be kept away from mares for at least 30 days.

Digital Radiology

Ultrasonography

Acupuncture

Reproductive
Medicine

Neonatal
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Endoscopy



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After Care Instructions:

- Postoperative care is usually needed for at least 2 weeks after castration. Schedule the surgery at a time you can be available for exercising.
- Ideally, you should develop a rapport with and feel comfortable around the young stallion before we castrate him. It can take months for stallion-like behaviors to moderate after castration.
- Consistent postoperative care is essential for a smooth, uncomplicated recovery. This is also a good time to begin daily training of your young horse.
- For the first 24 hours after castration, keep the horse confined and calm. During the first 6 hours after surgery, look at the animal every _____ minutes, then every _____ hours. Look for streaming of blood from the wound. Some dripping is to be expected, but call us immediately if blood streams from the wound. Also call us if you observe colic signs or any dramatic increase in scrotal swelling or pink/red tissue protruding from the wound.
- For two weeks following the castration, the horse should be bedded on straw.
- Administer _____ grams of Phenylbutazone _____ daily for 3-5 days as necessary.
- During days 2 through 5, the scrotum may swell up to 4 times its original size. This is normal. The postoperative swelling is reduced with exercise. The scrotum is usually back to normal size after day 5.
- Beginning on the day of the surgery, measure the rectal temperature daily before exercise.
- The exercise program should consist of 20 minutes of controlled exercise, both morning and evening. Lunging or ponying at the trot is best. The horse may start stiff gaited behind, but the stiffness resolves with more exercise.
- After exercise, use a hose to direct a stream of water against each side of the scrotum for at least 2 minutes. Spray from the side, not directly up into the wound. This hydrotherapy cleans the wound and stimulates healing.
- Apply fly spray as needed around the flanks and hindquarters. Spray from the side. Do not spray directly on the wound.
- From days 2 through 12, there may be some redness of the wound edge. This gradually resolves as the wound heals.
- Other recommendations: _____

Call Our Office If:

- You have any questions concerning castration.
- Your horse needs tetanus immunization before castration.
- Your horse's temperature in the morning, before exercise, is above 102.5° F.
- You observe excessive bleeding, swelling, or drainage from the scrotal incision.
- Your horse does not appear to be recovering normally from this surgery.