

Howells Veterinary Services Ltd.

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Colt Castration Advice

The following advice sheet is aimed at providing you with important information about your horse's upcoming castration. As well as giving you an insight into what to expect on the day it will also ensure that we have everything we need to make the job go smoothly.

On the day of castration we would be grateful if you could provide the following:

- A clean, well lit area for the procedure to take place- such as a small dry paddock or stable freshly bedded with straw.
- 2 buckets of clean warm water.
- Please ensure that your horse is already caught and wearing a head collar BEFORE we arrive.
- Vaccination status of your horse. If he is not up to date/or has never received a tetanus vaccine, we will need to give him anti-tetanus on the day.

In general colts are castrated between 6 months and 3 years of age, as long as they have 2 fully descended testicles within the scrotum. If both testicles are not descended then we will either wait to allow more time for the missing testicle to descend, or we may recommend that your horse has a full general anaesthetic and surgery to find and remove the un-descended testicle, this is often done at an equine hospital.

At Howells Veterinary Services we generally use the 'standing' method of castration. This involves the following:

- A clinical exam will be performed and the scrotum checked for the presence of two testicles.
- Sedation will be given intravenously and the scrotum cleaned.
- Local anaesthetic will be injected into each of the testicles and scrotal skin. The area is then re-cleansed.
- The vet will ready his/her instruments and scrub their hands.
- An incision is made in the scrotal skin and the testicle exteriorised. An 'Emasculator' is used to crush the blood vessels and release the testicle.
- The emasculator is held in place for a number of minutes to seal the blood vessels.
- The procedure is repeated in the second testicle.



The above protocol is the same for 'knock down'/general anaesthetic but in this case the horse will be fitted with a catheter and will be sleeping for the procedure. This is often done in very small ponies where there is limited room to perform a standing procedure.

The two incision sites are not sutured. This allows drainage and greatly reduces the risk of swelling and infection. Your horse will be given pain relief, antibiotics and anti-tetanus (if not up to date with his vaccinations)

Dripping of blood from the castration site is common for several hours, generally from the scrotal skin. The scrotal sac will contain a blood clot and this should not be dislodged if visible. It can also be normal to see a small amount of pink/red tissue protruding from the wound up to 24-48 hours post castration, this will usually shrink back into the site once the swelling starts to decrease.

The gelding can be turned out providing there is no bleeding or abnormal tissue protruding from the surgical site. Turn out or walking in hand will encourage drainage and decrease any swelling.

Castration is not without risk. The potential complications include:

- Haemorrhage (bleeding)
- Infections
- Swelling
- Prolapse of small intestine through the castration incision
- Scirrhus Cord formation

Please give the practice a call if you notice any of the following:

- Bleeding at a rate faster than you can count the drops
- Any discharge or an increase in obvious tissue protruding from the site
- Swelling of the prepuce or scrotum the size of a grapefruit or larger.
- If the gelding appears quiet or off colour and is reluctant to move.

Small intestine prolapse is a very rare complication of castration surgery. If you see tissue that looks sausage like protruding from the wound, call us immediately **(01347 823678)**

Frequently Asked Questions

1) How long does the sedation last?

The sedation loses about half of its effect within 20minutes of administering. Your horse should be behaving normally within the hour. As sedation has a prolonged effect on the horse's ability to swallow, we recommend removing your horse's food for 3 hours after the injection to avoid possible 'choke'.

2) When can I exercise my gelding?

If there are no complications he can return to light exercise in 2 weeks time and back to full work in 1 month.

3) How long will it take for his coltish behaviour to reduce?

His hormone levels will begin to drop immediately after castration. In some cases behavioural change is apparent within a few days and in other cases it takes longer or no difference is noted. The older the horse is, the more likely that he will retain his coltish behaviour. If he has been used to serve mares previously it is more likely he will retain his stallion behaviour.

If you have any questions or require further advice about colt castrations please do not hesitate to call us.