

Castration

Your colt has just been castrated (gelded) by your veterinarian. He is now a gelding. In this procedure, both testicles and the epididymus (also known as the “squealer”) are removed through two vertical incisions. Emasculators crush the cords, and the incisions are left open for drainage. The incisions are not sutured, because the horse’s body responds to the procedure by secreting serum that needs to drain. Some swelling will occur after the procedure, usually descending into the sheath due to gravity. This is normal.

The day of the procedure, it is best to keep your horse confined to keep the blood clots intact. Starting the day after the castration, you need to exercise your new gelding once or twice a day for 15-30 minutes for 7-10 days. This exercise needs to be an active walk or trot to aid in drainage of the incisions, which keeps the swelling to a minimum. Or, if your colt self-exercises in the pasture (not just standing around), you can turn him out for exercise. If the scrotum or sheath swells too much (more than a grapefruit), the most common reason is not enough exercise!

Your new gelding should act normally (eat, drink) after this procedure. Although this is considered a “routine” surgery, complications sometimes occur.

Possible complications of this procedure include:

1. Local infection at the site of surgery (< 10%)
2. Excessive bleeding (steady stream instead of dripping) (<1%)
3. Eventration of intestines through the inguinal ring. (<. 01%)

If your colt should go off feed, run a fever, or if the swelling does not go down with exercise, he may have developed an infection. If this happens, please contact your veterinarian. Your vet will examine the incision site to check the drainage, and may put your horse on antibiotics.

After the castration, some bleeding will occur because the incisions are not sutured, and the skin blood vessels may bleed. Slow dripping of blood up to an hour after castration is normal. If this should change to fast dripping or a stream of blood, contact your veterinarian right away. A blood clot from one of the cords may have come loose.

The third possible complication is intestinal eventration. Fortunately, we have never experienced this complication at Durango Equine. If you should see anything abnormal hanging through the incision, please contact your veterinarian immediately. The testicular cords descend from the abdomen through two openings, the inguinal rings, into the scrotum. When the testicles are removed, there is a remote chance that a piece of intestine could drop through the inguinal rings. This problem is directly related to the size of the rings, being most common in Standardbreds who have the largest rings. This is very rare in other breeds. If you suspect this problem, keep your horse calm until the vet arrives... offering food often diverts the horse’s attention.

After castration, your colt could get a mare pregnant up to 3 days because of residual sperm in his system (which will be urinated out). As for “stallion” behavior, it usually resides within a couple weeks after the procedure. Geldings that continue to act stud-like (sometimes called Proud-cut) do so because of either memory (they have bred mares and KNOW what it is all about) or increased steroid production from their adrenal glands (a gland next to the kidneys). A “TRUE” proud-cut stallion has testicular tissue left in – possibly a cryptorchid stallion where only one testicle was removed by a non-veterinarian, or a lay person gelded the horse and has mistaken the epididymus for the testicle and didn’t remove the testicle. A blood test can check for this condition.

Now that your colt is castrated, we hope you both will enjoy his new social life as a gelding. If you have any questions or problems, please contact the office @ Durango Equine Veterinary Clinic.