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# Castrations

This is a routine procedure that is performed for ease of management of the animal. It is usually performed on young colts, usually less than 1 year old as long as both testicles have descended, but can be performed at any age. We castrate most youngsters at their homes, but horses over 4 years old and donkeys have to come in to the surgery to have a general anaesthetic and a slightly different procedure to ensure that there are no complications.

The procedure can be done under standing sedation or under general anaesthetic, all depending on the size and temperament of the horse.

**THE PROCEDURE:** an incision is made into the scrotum to grasp a testicle, and then a clamp is used to cut and crush the blood supply and the seminal vessels so the testicle is cut off. The clamp stays on for 3 minutes to ensure that the vessels have stopped bleeding. The second testicle is removed in the same way. The incisions are left open to drain and will heal up within a few days.

**AFTERCARE:** once the horse is back on his feet and wide awake, he can have his food back. He should be walked out in hand on the day of the procedure to avoid disturbing the wound, and can then be turned out in a small paddock thereafter. He horse must get regular exercise or the scrotum will swell up and may lead to it getting infection in there. He will be able to get mares in foal for up to 4 weeks after the castration so he is best kept away from mares until then.

**COMPLICATIONS:** it is rare to get any complications but there are a few points to consider.

- **Bleeding;** there should be minimal bleeding during and after the procedure, but if the drips are coming too fast to count then this needs veterinary attention.
- **Infection;** if there is infection present the horse's scrotum will become hot, swollen and painful. These cases need veterinary attention and will need a course of antibiotics. Flies will be attracted to the wound and can introduce infection, so good fly repellent is essential.
- **Swelling;** most horse's scrotums will swell to a certain extent after the procedure and this is normal, and it will decrease over the next few days. Excessive swelling can be prevented by walking the horse and/or turning it out for exercise.
- **Exposed tissue;** rarely, part of the testicle covering will hang down through the incision after the vet has gone. The vet will need to come back to trim this off.
- Very rarely, the small intestines can fall out of the incision in the scrotum... this is an **EMERGENCY**, and the vet must be called immediately.