



## Castration

### Equine Castration (Gelding)

Castration is a surgical procedure to remove the testicles. It is performed in colts to modify their behavior and prevent their ability to breed. Although castration can be performed at any age, most colts are gelded before the age of 18 months.

In normal colts, the testicles are descended into the scrotum by the time of birth. In some colts, called “high flankers”, one testicle does not completely descend into the scrotum, instead remaining up higher in the inguinal canal. Colts with this abnormality may become easier to geld once the testicle has grown a bit larger to facilitate removal. Testicles that remain in the abdominal cavity are called cryptorchids or “ridglings”. Often colts with this condition require surgery within a sterile operating room to safely remove the testicle.

### Factors to consider before having your colt castrated:

**Tetanus vaccination:** It is important that the colt be vaccinated against tetanus infection, preferably before the procedure, as he will be most at risk for infection during the time of surgery and immediately after.

**Handling:** For your own safety and your horse’s benefit, it is strongly recommended that your colt be at least halter broken and accustomed to handling at the time of surgery so that he can be safely and easily managed after surgery. Getting the colt used to having his temperature taken rectally, as well as introducing him to having water sprayed between his hind legs from a hose, will make his post-operative care much easier for both of you!

**Time of year:** Although this procedure can technically be performed at any time of year, the best times are early spring or late fall, when the population of flies will be decreased.

**Location:** This procedure is most safely performed in an area on your farm that is relatively clean and dry (avoiding mud, standing water etc.) with a sufficient amount of space for the colt to lie down and then get up after the procedure, as well as some degree of confinement. The best locations tend to be a moderately sized, fenced-in grass pasture or a large box stall thickly bedded down with STRAW (it is best to avoid shavings for this procedure as they can more easily get into the open surgical sites)

**Planning ahead:** Your colt will require a bit of extra care and monitoring for approximately 2 weeks after this procedure. Therefore it is best if the castration is performed when this time commitment will not be a hardship for you.



# COASTAL ELITE VETERINARY SERVICES

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### Exercise

- During the first 8 hrs. after castration, check on the colt frequently (about once an hour)
- He should remain quiet in this stall for the first 24 hrs. after surgery
- The next day, begin hand walking the colt, 15- 20 min twice daily
- After one week of hand walking, allow supervised turnout into the round pen/small paddock if available
- Controlled exercise in the form of 15 minutes of trotting on the lunge, should begin 2 weeks after surgery, once to twice daily

### Cold hosing

Beginning the day after surgery, preferably after exercise, use a hose to gently stream cold water against each side of the scrotum for about 2 minutes. Try to spray from the side and NOT directly up into the incisions. This will help clean the area, further reduce swelling and stimulate healing. Continue cold hosing for at least one week after castration, until the majority of swelling and discharge has subsided.

### Temperature

If able to do so safely, it is advisable to take your horse's rectal temperature once daily during the 2 week recovery period. A horse's normal temperature should range between 98.5 – 101.5 degrees F

### Medication

Your horse may receive Antibiotics. Your horse will receive Anti-inflammatories

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### Complications vs. Normal – When to call the vet:

- Especially in the 24 hrs. After castration, it is normal for your horse to be a bit quiet. However, acting extremely lethargic, not eating, or having a temperature of 102 degrees or higher is not normal.
- Signs of colic (lying down excessively, rolling, severe sweating, trembling)
- Diarrhea
- Bleeding: Some dripping of blood is expected and normal following this procedure, especially within the first few days. A slow dripping of blood is normal, but a rapid drip (more than one drop/second) or a streaming of blood from the surgery site is a reason to call ASAP.
- Tissue protruding from incisions: Some pink tissue will be visible at the area of the surgery, but it should not protrude more than 1 inch down from the incision line. Please call the office right away if you notice tissue hanging out of the castration site at any time.
- Swelling: Especially within 2-5 days after surgery, significant swelling of the scrotum is expected and normal. Cold hosing the area and controlled exercise/movement will help decrease this swelling over time. However, if the scrotum is extremely swollen combined with your horse having a fever (temperature above 102) and/or white/yellow discharge from the incisions, an infection or seroma may be present. Please call our office if this is observed.

### Final Considerations:

It is best to keep your new gelding away from females for a period of 60 days after surgery. In some horses, especially those gelded at an older age, the stallion-like behavior may take a few more months to significantly subside. Please call our office at any time if you have questions following this procedure.

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