



# Select Equine Veterinary Services

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## Castration

Your colt has just been castrated. He is now a gelding. In this procedure both testicles and the epididymus (also known as the "squealer") are removed through one or two 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.

Your horse may be fed normally before and after the castration. **After the castration your horse should be kept confined for one day.** This reduces the chance of excessive bleeding and eventration (see below). Starting the day after the castration you need to **exercise your new gelding twice a day for 15-30 minutes for 7-10 days.** This exercise needs to be an active/brisk walk or slow trot to aid in drainage of the incisions which keeps the swelling (and risk of infection) to a minimum. We generally do not recommend turning your horse out for self-exercise because most horses will not move around enough to keep the incisions draining. In addition, if the horse rears and/or otherwise strains his abdominal muscles there is an increased risk of eventration (see below). If the scrotum or sheath swells too much, 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. Adverse events from general anesthesia (very low risk - includes bone fractures during recovery).
2. Local infection at the site of surgery.
3. Excessive bleeding with a steady stream instead of dripping.
4. Eventration of intestines through the inguinal ring.

If your horse stops eating, has a fever (temp > 101.5), or if the swelling does not go down with exercise, he may have developed an **infection**. If this happens, please contact our office. The doctors will most likely 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 vessels usually bleed. Slow dripping of blood for several hours after castration is normal. If this should change to fast dripping or a stream of blood, contact the doctors right away.

The third possible complication is intestinal **eventration**. If you should see anything abnormal hanging through the incision sites, please contact the doctors immediately. The testicular cords descend from the abdomen through two openings called "inguinal rings" into the scrotum. When the testicles are removed there is a chance that a section of intestine could drop through the inguinal rings. This complication is directly related to the size of the rings, being most common in Standardbreds who have the largest rings. This complication is very rare in other breeds. If you suspect this complication, keep your horse calm until the vet arrives. Offering food may help divert the horse's attention from the eventration. After stabilization, your horse will need to be sent to a referral equine hospital.

After castration your gelding could get a mare pregnant for up to 3 days because of residual sperm in his system (which will eventually be urinated out). "Stallion-like" behavior usually resides within a couple of 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. 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 horse is castrated, we hope you both will enjoy his new social life as a gelding.

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