

CLIENT INFORMATION SHEET

Cryptorchidectomy

Why should a cryptorchid testicle be removed?

In order to reduce the chances of a cryptorchid testicle developing into a tumour without early detection, removal is recommended. In addition, cryptorchid testicles continue to produce testosterone, which can make your horse's behaviour difficult to manage.

Horses can have either one or two cryptorchid testicles. In order to castrate a horse, both testicles, including any cryptorchid testicles, require removal. It is recommended that all cryptorchid testicles are removed if appropriate time has been given for the testicle to descend.

How is a cryptorchid diagnosed?

Horses should be born with two descended testicles, however, many horses can take a little longer for their testicles to appear in the scrotum.



A variety of techniques can be used to diagnose a cryptorchid testicle. These can include palpation of the scrotum (usually under sedation), ultrasonography of the scrotum, palpation per rectum, ultrasound evaluation per rectum, and hormone testing. Some of these tests may be performed by your veterinarian and some may be performed in hospital. In order to make an appropriate surgical plan, your surgeon will evaluate the scrotum under sedation.

Some horses that have already undergone castration can have some testicular tissue remaining and can exhibit similar signs to a cryptorchid horse. These horses usually continue their stallion-like behaviour despite having previously been castrated. It should be noted, however, that stallion-like behaviour alone is not sufficient to diagnose the presence of testicular tissue, as some horses can still exhibit this learned behaviour, even when there is no testicular tissue present.

How is my horse prepared for removal of the testicles?

Depending on the location of the testicles, in order to make entry into the abdomen as safe as possible, your horse may be fasted or have a minimal diet for approximately 48 hours. We recommend that this is done in hospital as many horses will become more difficult to manage at home if fasted. Fasting your horse in hospital will not increase the cost of the procedure.



Your surgeon will also discuss with you whether one or both testicles should be removed. If both testicles are cryptorchid, we recommend removal of both testicles. If only one testicle is cryptorchid and the other is normally descended, the majority of horses undergo removal of both testicles as they are not destined to be breeding stallions. The majority of owners prefer that their horse is castrated. It is essential that you tell us whether or not you plan to breed from your horse.

Please be advised that horses with a single descended testicle will typically produce fewer sperm than horses with two normally descended testicles.

How are testicles removed?

Depending on the location of the testicles, they may be removed either under sedation and local anaesthesia, or under general anaesthesia. If the testicle is located in the abdomen, removal may be performed via keyhole surgery to visualise and control the blood supply. Even if a keyhole surgery is performed, there will be either one or two incisions that are large enough to remove the testicles through. Some testicular locations require larger incisions in the scrotum or adjacent to the scrotum. The normally descended testicle is removed routinely, either under sedation and local anaesthesia, or general anaesthesia.

Will my horse need to be clipped?

The surgical site(s) will be clipped with sufficient margins to allow us to perform the procedure in a sterile manner. This will usually involve one large clipped area on each flank, or a large clipped area under the abdomen. Your horse will also have an intravenous catheter placed which will require a small clipped patch over the jugular vein.



Does my horse need to be vaccinated for tetanus?

Tetanus is an incredibly serious and often fatal condition which any horse undergoing surgery is at risk from. Your horse must be vaccinated for tetanus before treatment commences. If this is not possible prior to your appointment, your horse will receive a tetanus antitoxin prior to surgery.

How long will my horse be in hospital?

The length of hospitalisation can vary depending on the location of the testicles and procedure required. However, as a general rule, your horse will be evaluated the day of admission, undergo surgery one to two days after admission and will remain in hospital for one to four days post-operatively.

When will I receive updates on my horse's progress?

After your horse's initial evaluation, your resident or surgeon will contact you to discuss the findings and the proposed course of action. Please be advised that this conversation may take place when your horse is admitted, shortly afterwards, or we may contact you in the evening on the day your horse arrives. Any potential risks of surgery will be discussed with you at this time.



Please be advised that, due to our evaluations, your horse's treatment protocol may differ from our proposed plan prior to seeing your horse. Any changes will be discussed with you prior to proceeding with treatment.

You will also be contacted after your horse's procedure has taken place and once daily, usually in the evening, throughout your horse's stay, unless arranged otherwise. Please be assured that if there are any complications with your horse's procedure, you will be contacted during the procedure itself.

Will my horse need a general anaesthetic?

Some horses admitted to the hospital for treatment of cryptorchid testicles will have a general anaesthetic.

Some horses undergoing the procedure standing will require epidural anaesthesia to make them more comfortable during the procedure. The potential risks of this will be discussed with you prior to the procedure.

Will my horse's sutures require removal?

The surgical sites will be sutured closed and the sutures will require removal at approximately 14 days post-operatively. For horses that are particularly sensitive around their flanks or if the surgical sites are under the abdomen, your surgeon may use absorbable suture which does not require removal. Regardless of the suture type used, we recommend the surgical sites are evaluated by your veterinarian 1-2 weeks after discharge.

Do I need to clean the surgical sites?

It is important to monitor the sites visually and assess for increased swelling, discharge, or any evidence of surgical site breakdown. However, please do not touch, scrub, or apply products to the site unless advised to do so by your veterinarian.

When can my horse be turned out?

The timing of turnout will depend on the size and healing of the surgical sites. All horses where the testicles are located in the abdomen will require box rest for a minimum of 3 weeks after discharge unless stated otherwise by your surgery team. If your horse requires a longer or shorter period of box rest, this will be stated in your discharge instructions.



A shorter period of box rest is only recommended when the testicles are located outside the abdomen. Please be advised that if there are any surgical site concerns, your veterinarian may request a longer period of box rest. Once your stated period of box rest has ended, your horse can be turned out in a small paddock for a further 4 weeks before any ridden or lunging exercise occurs. Please consult with your veterinarian as sedation may be required for turnout.



When can my horse be exercised at home?

Your horse should be on strict box rest initially. If advised by your surgeon, short periods (no more than 5 minutes twice daily) of hand walking are permitted after 2 weeks, providing your horse is well behaved and does not trot or become overly exuberant. After a period of 8 weeks after discharge, providing the surgical sites have healed well, your horse can begin light ridden or lunging work, providing it is safe for you to do so. The time periods above may be shorter if the testicles are not located in the abdomen. Please consult with your veterinarian as light sedation may be required when commencing exercise.

When should my horse be re-evaluated?

Your horse should be evaluated 1-2 weeks after discharge to evaluate the surgical sites. Any non-absorbable sutures should be removed. Your veterinarian may also choose to remove some or all absorbable sutures. We recommend prompt evaluation if your horse exhibits any colic signs, reduced appetite, change in consistency or quantity of faecal production, any abnormalities of the jugular vein or any swelling, discharge or breakdown of the surgical sites.

When will I find out if the cryptorchid testicle(s) was (were) abnormal?

Following removal, the cryptorchid testicle/testicles will be submitted for histopathology (evaluation under a microscope) to determine the nature of the cells present. These results can take approximately 1 week, or longer if a mass is particularly large or unusual in nature. We will contact you as soon as the results are available.

My horse is being admitted for a surgical procedure, when will this take place?

Your horse will typically have surgery 1-2 days after admission. This is to allow your horse to be fasted, if necessary, which improves the safety of the procedure.

Will my horse be sent home with medications?

Your horse will usually be sent home with an oral anti-inflammatory (usually phenylbutazone (bute)). Please do let us know if your horse does not eat, or has an adverse reaction to bute. Depending on the nature of the surgery, your horse may require post-operative antimicrobials.



As with all medications, if your horse becomes depressed, exhibits colic signs, has a reduced appetite, or has a change in the frequency or consistency of their faeces, please discontinue the medication and contact your veterinarian.

What should I monitor for once my horse is home?

Please monitor your horse to ensure they are defaecating with a normal frequency and consistency. Monitor the catheter site (clipped patch on the neck) for any evidence of swelling, firmness, or discharge. In addition, please monitor the surgical sites for any discharge, swelling or surgical site breakdown. While on medication, monitor your horse's demeanour, appetite and faecal output. Please call your vet in the first instance if concerned.



Will my horse be able to be used for breeding after surgery?

It is essential that you tell us whether or not you plan to breed your horse. Once a horse is castrated, they cannot be used for breeding; the procedure is not reversible. If both testicles are removed, breeding will not be possible. If only one testicle is removed, and if the other testicle is normal, breeding is possible but a horse will typically produce less sperma.

