

Equine Castration

EQUINE SURGERY & EQUINE FIELD SERVICE

What is castration?

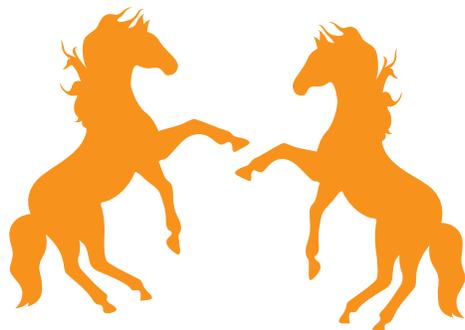
Other names for castration include emasculation, gelding, or cutting. Regardless of what you call it, the procedure entails removal of the testicles and associated tissue, as well as, part of the spermatic cord.

Why castrate your horse?

- Prevent unwanted breeding of mares
- Avoid undesired stallion-like behaviors such as biting, fighting behavior, mounting mares, and aggression towards humans
- Improve ability to stable at boarding facilities
It is important to note that if you own an adult stallion (>3 years of age), especially one that has bred mares, these behaviors are more difficult to correct and are not likely to resolve with castration alone.

When to castrate?

Complications and surgical risks are lower for young horses. As the horse's age increases, so do the size of the testicles and their associated blood supply. Most veterinarians agree the ideal time to castrate is between 6-12 months of age, but one must first ensure two testicles are present. Presence of only one testicle in the scrotum could indicate a condition known as cryptorchidism. This condition requires a more invasive surgical approach and is usually referred to an equine hospital. Removal of only the visible testicle would still allow for testosterone production, causing the horse to potentially breed and display aggressive stallion-like behavior.



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What to expect

- Physical exam
- Sedation
- Depending on the horse's temperament and the environment, some veterinarians may choose to perform the castration procedure with the horse standing using a local anesthetic.
- Induction of general anesthesia
- Skin incisions over each testicle
- Stripping of the connective tissue
- Emasculation (crushing) of blood supply
- Removal of testicles
- Incisions are left open to drain

Complications

- Some bleeding is expected
- Your veterinarian may pack the area if a steady stream of blood is noted
- Persistent bleeding may require your horse to be anesthetized again to locate the bleeding vessel and ligate it
- Moderate swelling is expected
- Infection
- Evisceration**: most severe, yet rare complication. This occurs when a piece of intestine slips through the inguinal ring and out the incision

Notify your veterinarian immediately if you think you see intestines in the scrotal incision

Aftercare

After recovering from the procedure, it is important to provide the horse with 24 hour stall rest to allow for an adequate blood clot to form and stabilize. It is then recommended the horse undergo 20 minutes of daily controlled exercise for one week. An anti-inflammatory medication may be prescribed to help with postoperative swelling and pain. Hosing the area with cold water can help with swelling as well.