

Donkey Castration



A DONKEY ANAESTHETISED FOR SURGERY

Castration of donkeys requires special care because donkeys have a larger blood supply to the testicles compared with horses and as such are at greater risk of bleeding post-surgery.

For this reason most donkey castrations are performed under general anaesthesia (GA), to allow a ligature (secure suture) to be placed around the blood vessels. This reduces the risk of post-operative bleeding and intestinal prolapse through the surgical incision. Due to the need for GA and the technique required, castration is best performed at the clinic.

Donkeys are a special case

1. The testicular artery and vein in donkeys are larger than normal, necessitating the need for placement of a ligature (suture). A clean surgical procedure is required for ligature placement to minimise the risk of infection.
2. Donkeys are often presented at an older age for castration, which may increase the risk of post-operative complications.
3. A GA is required for most donkey castrations.
4. Miniature donkey breeders often believe they should be castrated at a very young age; there is no evidence that they cannot be safely castrated as yearlings or older.
5. Postoperative care in some unhandled animals can prove difficult.
6. The stoic nature of donkeys can result in postoperative problems not being noticed early enough.
7. Most donkey castrations heal in around 4-5 weeks without any major complications.
8. Castrated males should preferably be kept separate from females for about four weeks following surgery.

PRE-OPERATIVE PREPARATION

The attending veterinary surgeon should carry out a pre-operative assessment of the patient to check the heart and lung function with a stethoscope, and ensure that tetanus vaccination is up to date. The environment for the operation can be assessed for safety, cleanliness and suitability. Discussion with the owner about postoperative management and what complications to look out for should also be reviewed.



THE TESTICULAR ARTERY AND VEIN BEING LIGATED



THE LIGATED TESTICLE BEING REMOVED WITH AN EMASCULATOR (SURGICAL INSTRUMENT USED TO CRUSH AND CUT THE VESSELS AND SPERM CORD)

Post-operative care

This is crucial to the successful outcome of castration in donkeys. Post-operative pain relief is important to maintain movement and appetite. Movement has an important role to dissipate swelling and encourage wound drainage. 10-15 minutes walking in hand twice a day for the first five days is often recommended.

Food and water intake and faecal and urine output should be also be closely monitored for the week after surgery. A reduction in food intake can increase the risk of hyperlipaemia. Reduced water intake or dropping production may be an early sign of intestinal impaction.

An antibiotic injection and pain relief will normally be given at the time of surgery, and a course of oral anti-inflammatories for several days helps the recovery. Courses of antibiotics after surgery, whilst often used, are of questionable benefit in preventing infections.

Many XLEquine practices regularly liaise with The Donkey Sanctuary with regard to treatment and management of donkeys. XLEquine would like to acknowledge the work they do to transform the quality of life of donkeys in the UK and abroad. The Donkey Sanctuary is a charity that will never turn away from a donkey in need. They rely on donations to continue providing for donkeys and mules worldwide.

www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk

POST-OPERATIVE COMPLICATIONS

Excess haemorrhage (Bleeding)

This complication normally arises within the first 24 hours after surgery. The bleeding may come from blood vessels in the scrotal skin or the testicular vessels, often as a result of excitement or over exercise. With fast drips or a continuous flow of blood, veterinary advice must be sought immediately, to assess the degree of blood loss and treatment required. Rarely, a second GA may be necessary to investigate and treat the bleeding, using temporary clamps placed on the stump.

Infection

Wounds should be monitored daily for excessive swelling, discharge, lameness or loss of appetite, which could indicate wound infection. Veterinary advice should be sought if wound infection is suspected. Wounds may be enlarged to promote drainage and a course of antibiotics administered. In rare cases infection may extend deeper and become more established, requiring injectable antibiotics and/or possibly surgery to remove infected tissue.

Eventration

There is a small risk following surgery that a loop of intestine or internal abdominal fat could pass through the body wall and the surgical incision, particularly if the sutures slip or rupture. If the patient develops a sudden swelling or signs of colic, veterinary advice should be sought immediately, as emergency surgery may be required to clean and replace or repair the exposed gut.



XLEquine is a novel and exciting initiative conceived from within the veterinary profession made up of independently owned, progressive veterinary practices located throughout the United Kingdom, members of XLEquine are committed to working together for the benefit of all their clients.
© XLVet UK Ltd.

No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission of the publisher.

For further information contact your local XLEquine practice:

www.xlequine.co.uk

Go to www.xlequine.co.uk