

GELDING YOUR COLT



WHEN TO GELD YOUR COLT?

A colt can be gelded at any age, as long as both testicles have descended, ideally in spring or autumn when the flies of summer and mud of winter can be avoided. There are many different opinions on the "correct" age to geld a colt and this depends on: owner preference, temperament of the colt (particularly "colty" behaviour), body size of the colt and whether the testicles have descended fully into the scrotum. Some owners may have a preference of having the colt gelded either before or after weaning. In general, we perform most of our geldings between 5-11 months of age.

PREPARING FOR THE PROCEDURE

To perform the gelding, we need a soft, flat area with no obstacles (trees/fences/ditches) - most small grassy paddocks will suffice. The whole procedure is much smoother if the colt is well handled; as a minimum he should be halter-broken. We also need dry weather to be able to perform the surgery, as the risks of infection are much greater in the wet conditions. Tetanus protection is also required - if the colt has not received his full immunisation course then a short acting tetanus anti-toxin can be administered on the day of the procedure.

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THE DAY OF THE PROCEDURE

When we arrive, we will listen to your colt's heart and check that both testicles have descended. He will be sedated and an **intravenous catheter will be placed** to ensure that any medications can be safely and quickly administered. Our practice at Elite Equine is to perform the gelding under a general anaesthetic and have another **vet present to monitor the anaesthetic**. It is important to monitor your horse's vital signs during the procedure as often times, the anaesthetics have the highest risk during the surgery

If you're a little squeamish you can skip the next few lines, but if you want to know the nitty gritty then keep reading! After inducing anaesthetic and performing a surgical scrub of the area, an incision will be made over the testicle and the testicle is exteriorised from the connective tissue surrounding it. Emasculators with a crushing mechanism is placed on the spermatic cord and vessel. If the colt has large inguinal rings (the passage leading to the abdominal cavity), the vet may decide to place a suture around the tunic to close this. The testicle is removed and the emasculators taken off. This technique is repeated on the other side.

The skin incisions are left open to drain to avoid trapping in infection. Your colt will receive **pain relief** and **tetanus vaccination/antitoxin** as required. The vet will wait with your horse until he is able to stand (usually around 10-15 minutes later) and although the vast majority of horses get up uneventfully, some can be a little wobbly for a few minutes.



AFTER THE PROCEDURE

Please keep the colt in a **small yard or stable** for the first 24 hours to assist with clotting and allow close monitoring. After this we recommend normal turnout as it is important for him to move around to reduce the risk of swelling. We will also prescribe phenylbutazone (bute) as an anti-inflammatory for pain relief. No antibiotics are required for routine geldings.

Although testosterone levels decline quite quickly over a few days, the colt must be kept away from mares for 6-8 weeks, as they can still potentially impregnate a mare during this time!

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COMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Castration is a common routine procedure that is generally well tolerated. However, it is an invasive procedure and some complications can occur.

Anaesthetic- As geldings are performed on young, healthy horses, the anaesthetic risk is generally low.

Haemorrhage- Although some bleeding is normal for an open castration, we ligate the major vessels as standard practice to reduce this risk.

Evisceration (of intestine)- Is a higher risk for certain breeds and large inguinal rings. We ligate ('tie-off') the tunic as standard practice to reduce this risk.

Infection- We optimise a clean, quick procedure and promote good aftercare to reduce this risk.

The most common complications we see is some **swelling** around the scrotum and sheath which usually materialises 2–3 days post-operatively. A little swelling is expected and should dissipate within a few days with exercise. We also follow up with all owners after the procedure to ensure your horse is healing well.

CALL THE VET IF:

- There is a **constant stream** of bleeding/clear fluid and you cannot count the drips.
- There is any **tissue** hanging from the incision.
- There is more than a mango sized **swelling** for over 3 days, or it is rapidly increasing.
- He becomes **dull, off food** or **colicky**



ADDITIONAL INFO

If both testicles have **not descended by 2 years of age**, your colt may need to go into hospital for a more involved procedure to remove the retained testicle.

Please do not hesitate to contact us on **0412 619 740** 8am-5pm Monday-Friday if you have any questions or to discuss your individual horse's requirements,

