

RETROSPECTIVE STUDY OF SPERMATIC CORD INFECTIONS (SCI) IN HORSES

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Introduction

An important complication after castration is spermatic cord infection (SCI). To gain more insight, we examined retrospectively 49 referred cases with SCI.

Material and Methods

Data were collected of the castration procedure and the post-operative recovery. Clinical presentation of SCI, and treatment were recorded. Follow up (at least 1 year) information was collected by telephone.

Results

Of 49 horses 26 were Dutch warmbloods, and 23 were other breeds. Mean age at castration was 38.2 months (range 12-72). Castration was performed recumbent (56%) or standing (44%). In 19%, an open technique, and in 81%, a half-closed technique was used. In 50%, vicryl 7 metric (USP 5) was used as ligature. No antibiotics were used pre-operative. Mean time between castration and symptoms of SCI was 8 months. Dutch warmbloods, and older horses (>36 months) suffered more from generalized illness. SCI surgery included funicectomy or drainage and were performed in respectively 45 and 4 patients. SCI surgery was successful in 95% of the cases.

Conclusion/ discussion

Several studies have demonstrated that older horses are more prone to develop complications after castration, which might explain the higher mean age in our study group [1]. Our study also identified a significant increased incidence of generalized illness in older horses in conjunction with SCI. None of the horses in our study was treated with antibiotics pre-castration, whereas application of antibiotics peri-operative has been shown to be associated with a lower incidence of postoperatively infections [2]. The most frequently used ligature was vicryl 7 metric (USP 5), and might

have increased the risk on SCI. Papers on equine castration complications associate ligatures with a higher incidence of SCI and, if used, they recommend an absorbable ligature (USP 0 or 1)[1,2]. Prognosis of SCI surgery was very good.

1. May KA, Moll HD. Recognition and management of equine castration complications. *Comp Cont Educ Pract Vet.* 2002;24:150-162
2. Moll HD, Pelzer KD, Pleasant RS, Modransky PD, May KA. A survey of equine castration complications. *J Equine Vet Sci.* 1995;15:522-6.