

ADMISSION FOR SURGERY



Your horse may have been referred to Rainbow Equine Hospital for a surgery appointment by your regular vet, or as a regular client of Rainbow Equine Hospital your horse may have undergone examination here leading to the recommendation for surgery. Either way it is important that before undergoing surgery, the diagnosis is as accurate as possible, meaning that further investigation may be necessary before the operation. If your horse is insured it is also important that the insurance company has been notified and if possible the procedure pre-authorised.

Surgery has traditionally been performed under general anaesthesia however more recently a number of common procedures have been performed standing under sedation. The ability to do this depends on the procedure to be performed and the temperament of the horse. Both methods carry potential risks and complications.

General anaesthesia has associated risks, however with the development of new drugs, a greater understanding of equine anaesthesia and experienced veterinary operators these risks have reduced dramatically. Ten years ago worldwide approximately 1 in 100 horses undergoing surgery (not including colic surgery) had a fatal anaesthetic related complication. This figure has dramatically reduced with the latest estimate being nearer 1 in 1000. Anaesthetic and post-operative risks (such as impaction colic) can be reduced by simple measures such as avoiding transport on the day of surgery. For this reason and to allow the horse to settle in their new environment, horses are ideally admitted to Rainbow Equine Hospital the day before surgery. If your horse has any special dietary requirements, medications or rugs that might be required during their stay, please clearly label them and give them to the yard staff on admission. To reduce the risk of infection your horse should also be brushed clean prior to admission.

Your vet will be able to discuss the risks and estimated costs relating to the particular surgery for which your horse is scheduled.

Anaesthesia will be induced through a catheter placed in the jugular vein; your horse will have a patch of hair clipped and the skin scrubbed at this catheter site to reduce the risk of infection. The surgery site and wide margins of hair will also be clipped and aseptically scrubbed prior to surgery.

Antibiotics and anti-inflammatories will be administered routinely with the type and duration depending on the surgery. Please advise us of any known drug reactions or allergies prior to treatment, or if particular drug withdrawal times need to be observed due to upcoming competitions.

Unfortunately some horses will be admitted which require emergency treatment such as exploratory laparotomy (colic surgery), fracture repair, or septic joint treatment. These cases have to take priority and will jump the queue for theatre, sometimes delaying your horse's surgery until the following day. Hopefully you appreciate that if your horse required emergency treatment it too would be prioritised!

Following surgery you will be contacted when your horse is standing after their general anaesthetic or has recovered from their standing sedation. This is likely to be a number of hours after the procedure has started.

Your horse will likely require aftercare, which may include bandage changes, wound cleaning, intensive care or drug administration. These are best carried out under veterinary supervision. Your horse will likely remain at Rainbow Equine Hospital until it is deemed safe for him/her to travel home where your regular vet will resume primary care. Discharge instructions will be given to guide your horse's recovery and a copy will be sent to your regular vet.