Marble-induced pyometra in an Appaloosa mare
Jessica Klabnik-Bradford, Maria Soledad Ferrer, Christopher Blevins, Laurie Beard
Department of Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS

Marble-induced pyometras have not been reported previously. This case reports a new possible complication of using intrauterine marbles to suppress estrus in mares. A 16-year old Appaloosa mare presented with a foul-smelling, purpurative vulvar discharge. No reproductive history was available. Pyometra, endometritis or vaginitis were suspected. Transrectal palpation, transrectal ultrasound and fluid cytology were performed. Transrectal ultrasound revealed a corpus luteum and a large fluid-filled uterus. A 34-mm round hyperechoic structure was noted in the left uterine horn. The cervix was firm. Cytology of the draining fluid revealed large numbers of degenerate neutrophils. Pyometra was confirmed and the presence of a mummified fetus or intrauterine marble was suspected. Uterine endoscopy was indicated to directly assess the uterine lumen, which confirmed the structure to be a glass marble. It was recommended to remove the marble during estrus and treat the pyometra. Diestrus was shortened with dinoprost (5 mg IM) and the marble was removed during estrus. Misoprostol (200 µg) was administered intra-cervically to induce cervical dilation and facilitate marble removal. The marble was manipulated towards the cervix transrectally and then through the cervix per vagina. The owners declined treatment of the pyometra. After questioning the owners, it was determined that the marble had been in place for at least two years. This case suggests that pyometra may be a complication of using intrauterine marbles for estrus suppression in mares and stresses the importance of removing the marble once estrus suppression is no longer desired. Pyometra is typically associated with cervical incompetence. This mare’s cervix dilated properly during estrus, and estrus was confirmed prior to presentation. It is possible that the marble acted as a foreign body or a nidus for infection. Although this mare’s fertility was not tested, it would be reasonable that the pyometra could impact long-term fertility.

Keywords: Pyometra, glass marble, mares

Reference