Surgical correction of priapism in an 18 year old Quarter Horse gelding
H.S. Austin
Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK

Priapism is a prolonged penile erection in the absence of sexual desire, and is observed in several animal species as well as in man. Though uncommon, priapism in horses is most often observed in stallions and is occasionally reported following administration of phenothiazine derivatives for sedation. Impotence is a common sequella to priapism in stallions, making successful treatment critical in valuable breeding animals. Medical management of priapism may utilize slings, ice baths, massage, cholinergic blockers, diuretics and alpha-adrenergic agents. If conservative therapy is unsuccessful, irrigation of the corpus cavernosum penis with heparinized saline or surgical procedures such as vascular shunts, partial phallectomy, or complete phallectomy with urethrostomy may be performed.

An 18 year old Quarter Horse gelding presented for apparent inability to retract his penis of less than two hours duration. Upon physical examination, selective erection of the corpus cavernosum tissue suggested the diagnosis of priapism. No other abnormalities were noted. No history of trauma, diet change, or administration of phenothiazine derivatives was reported. Initial treatment included injections of phenylephrine into the corpus cavernosum, and through-and-through heparinized saline lavage of the corpus cavernosum penis. Both techniques resulted in temporary resolution of the priapism. Benztropine mesylate was administered intravenously with no noted improvement. The patient was also treated with penile slings, ice packs, purse string sutures and acupuncture. The priapism remained refractory to medical treatment and ten days after admission, en bloc resection and perineal urethrostomy with spatulation of the urethra was performed. The gelding recovered well from surgery, and returned to his previous level of athleticism.

The pathogenesis of priapism in the horse is not well understood, and reports of successful treatment with medical management alone are limited.

Keywords: Priapism, equine, phallectomy, gelding, en bloc resection

References