



What is a perineal hernia?

A perineal hernia is a progressive weakening of the muscles around the rectum (pelvic diaphragm). The perineal hernia allows fat or organs (bladder, intestines, prostate) from the abdominal cavity to bulge into the area surrounding the rectum resulting in a bulging sac beneath the skin. The most common cause of perineal hernia is the high level of testosterone in middle-aged to older entire male dogs, therefore entire older males are predisposed. Any condition that results in straining or increased intra-abdominal pressure can also result in a perineal hernia e.g. prostatic disease.

How do we investigate perineal hernias?

A rectal examination will confirm the defect in the muscular wall and also allow examination of the prostate gland. Abdominal radiographs and ultrasound are required to evaluate the contents of the abdominal cavity and hernia. Ultrasonography will further assess the health of the prostate gland. Blood and urine tests are usually required to evaluate the general health status of the patient. Cases with displacement of the bladder can present as emergencies and require urgent stabilisation prior to investigation and definitive treatment.

How can we treat perineal hernias?

Most cases will require surgical repair of the hernia as well as castration in entire males to reduce the risk of failure. Some hernias are repaired using the muscles that are present within the pelvic diaphragm, although many require movement of additional muscle into the area in order to close the hernia (internal obturator muscle elevation). Combining these procedures results in a much higher success rate. If surgery is not feasible, conservative management is an option - feeding a diet high in fibre and water, use of stool softeners and periodic manual evacuation can alleviate some of the straining to pass faeces.

What kind of aftercare is required following surgery?

Your pet will be hospitalised for 1-2 days. Your pet will be discharged with pain relief. Suture removal will be required 7-10 days post-operatively. A high fibre diet with a high water content as well as stool softeners will be required for 4-6 weeks post-operatively.

What kind of outcome is expected?

Over 90% of cases receiving surgical repair using a combined technique and castration, resolve following the surgery. Complications are numerous but only occur in a minority of cases. Complications include infection, local nerve damage, straining to defecate and faecal incontinence. The majority of these complications are treatable and often resolve in 4-6 weeks. Recurrence of perineal hernia can occur in a number of cases. Recurrence is usually due to surgical technique or failure to identify and treat any underlying disease process that contributed to the perineal hernia.

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