

## About Arthroscopy

Arthroscopy (keyhole surgery) in horses started to commonly be undertaken in the late 1980's, since then its use has massively expanded and it is now one of the most common surgical procedures conducted in equine practice.

The advantages of arthroscopy over arthrotomy (directly opening up of the joint) are:

- No need to have large wounds to gain access;
- Much less aftercare;
- The view obtained of the joint often gives far better assessment.
- Much less risk of post-operative infection.

Since Clyde Vet Group Equine Hospital opened in 2005, we have conducted several hundred arthroscopic procedures.

## Conditions Commonly Treated by Arthroscopy

Removal of bone fragments from joints (such as OCD or traumatic fractures).

Flushing a septic (or infected) joints. Arthroscopy has the advantage that it allows the surgeon to visualise any debris within the joint and flush through large volumes of fluid (often 40 litres).

Assessment of tendon sheaths, such as troublesome Windgalls or Thoroughpins. Joint assessment when radiographs have not revealed abnormalities (particularly the stifle joint).

Removal of damaged ligament or tendon fibres.

The selective placement of medication within bone cysts (particularly the stifle joint).

## The Procedure

Arthroscopy is conducted with the horse under general anaesthesia. After clipping and careful cleaning of the skin the joint is distended with sterile fluid.

An arthroscope (telescope-like instrument) is then introduced into the distended joint. A camera is attached to the arthroscope allowing excellent visualisation of the joint interior.

Instruments are introduced into the joint through a different site to allow triangulation. using the view provided the surgeon can then remove fragments etc from the interior of the joint. Small motorised burns (usually 4mm in diameter) are used to assist tissue removal.

The joint is flushed using 5 litres of fluid before the skin incisions are sutured. The horse is then recovered from anaesthesia with the help of our assisted recovery system.

## Post Operation

On average, the horse will remain at the hospital for 3 or 4 days post operatively. The procedure is recorded on a DVD so clients can observe the interior of the joint (if requested).

The horse's joint will be bandaged for a minimum of 6 days (stifle joints are covered with an adherent dressing). The horse will usually receive antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs for a few days.

Sutures require to be removed 10-14 days post operation. After returning home the horse usually undergoes a period of controlled exercise before returning to work.