



Northeast Pennsylvania Equine Clinic, L.L.C.

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Sheath Cleaning

General Information

Sheath cleaning is an important part of managing male horses. The sheath requires cleaning because of the accumulation of a waxy secretion called *smegma*. Three compartments within the sheath must be carefully cleaned. The frequency and type of sheath cleaning vary among horses. Some horses require it every month, and others less often. Some horses develop dry, painful crusts that require careful removal using a water-soluble lubricant. Some horses have a damp, smelly sheath that requires more frequent cleaning. These horses should be carefully examined to eliminate any infection or possibly precancerous growths.

The color and character of smegma varies. Dry, firm smegma is usually blackish. In horses with a damp sheath, the smegma tends to be dry. Some horses with a pink sheath have reddish smegma that is often mistaken for blood.

Sheath cleaning does not necessarily require tranquilizing the horse or “dropping” (extending) the penis. Anxious horses prone to kicking require patient, gentle training to show them that sheath cleaning is not painful. This training is best done every day, using warm water and non-irritating soap, until the horse becomes accustomed to the procedure.

Materials

- 1 pair of latex gloves
- Warm water
- Liquid soap (non-irritating)
- Assistant to hold the horse

Procedure

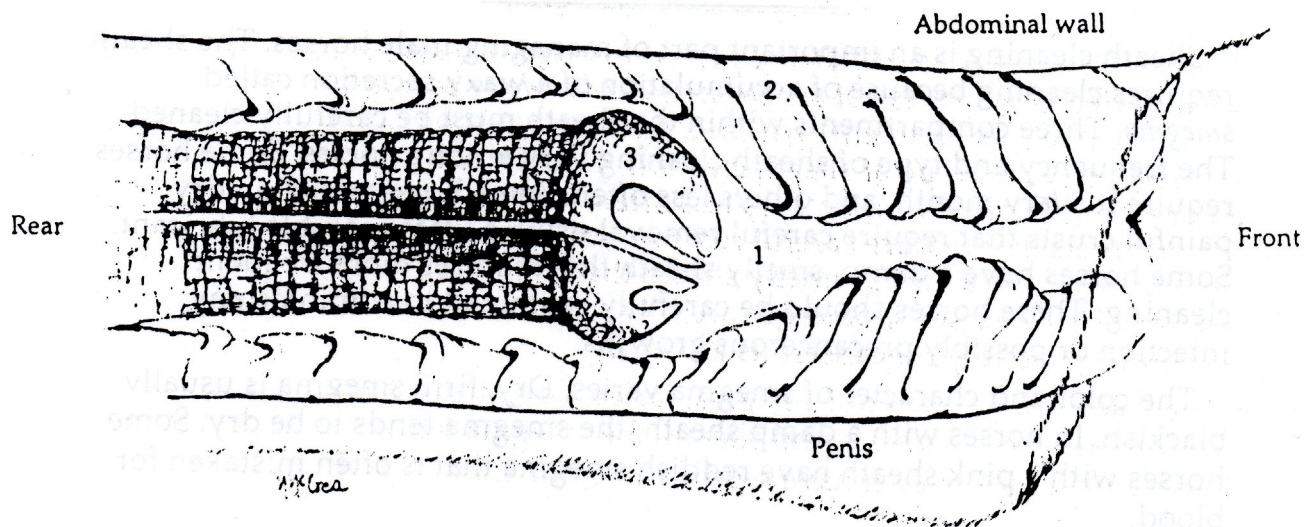
1. Thoroughly wash all of the folds in the front compartment of the sheath. This compartment is usually wrist deep.
2. Apply liquid soap back into the second compartment, around the penis. This compartment tends to be at a depth to the mid-forearm.
3. The last compartment, the *urethral diverticulum*, is a small sac located just inside the tip of the penis, at the top of the urethra. Clean this little sack using your index

Sheath Cleaning continued

finger to scoop out the grey, waxy “bean” of smegma. This can cause some discomfort. Sometimes the “bean has grown to walnut size and must be broken up before it can be removed.

4. Rinse all of the compartments with warm water. Some owners use a hose to irrigate the sheath. If you use a hose, don't use excessive water pressure. Let the sheath drip dry after rinsing.

Cross section of the sheath and penis, showing the front compartment (1), the second compartment surrounding the penis (2), and the urethral diverticulum (3).



Call Our Office If:

- You have any questions concerning sheath cleaning.
- Your horse will not tolerate sheath cleaning.
- You observe any abnormalities in or around your horse's sheath.