

Perineal Rupture (Perineal Hernia)

What is the perineum?

The perineum is the area of the body associated with rectum, the lower back and bottom part of the abdomen. It is made of a sling of muscles which interlace to form a “diaphragm”, holding the abdominal contents in their correct position.

What is a perineal rupture, and what are the symptoms?

Rupture of the muscles in this region leads to part of the lower digestive or urinary tract to be positioned abnormally. The muscles can become weak secondary to high levels of testosterone, prostate disease, or any other disease that causes excessive straining. Symptoms include a soft swelling in the perineal region, constipation or difficulty passing faeces, straining to urinate, and abdominal pain. The most commonly affected dogs are middle-aged and older male non-castrated dogs, but all ages and sexes can be affected.

Investigation and treatment

A member of the surgical team will discuss your pet's history and symptoms to decide the best individual course of action. This will include a full physical examination, and will often include blood tests, X-rays, a CT-scan or an ultrasound scan to determine if any underlying disease is influencing the symptoms. Typical surgical management requires an incision through the skin of the perineum, where the herniated contents (eg. intestine, rectum, prostate) are placed back into the abdomen, a muscle flap is then created, and these muscles are then sutured together to reinforce the region. Because this disease is testosterone responsive, castration is strongly advised at the same time as surgery.

Prognosis

Most dogs recover very well from this procedure, but are hospitalised overnight to ensure their comfort. Dogs often very quickly return to normal function and have increased ability to pass faeces normally. If your pet has had a perineal rupture on one side, it is possible to develop the condition on the other side.