

Range Animal Hospital
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Modified Forssell's Operation for Equine Cribbing

- An uncommon but serious condition in the horse; definitive treatment is always best.
- The difference between cribbing and simple chewing must be understood. In cribbing, the horse places his upper teeth over an object, such as a stall door, and then flexes his neck and sucks air into the gastrointestinal rather than the respiratory system.
- Excessive air in the GI system can cause medical problems. Gas colic is a frequent problem in many cribbers.
- Many appliances have been developed to discourage cribbing, and their success rates are marginal.
- The Forssell's operation was developed to destroy the cribbing horse's ability to perform neck flexion and the subsequent air sucking of cribbing. The original Forssell's operation only cut and removed the omohyoid and sternothyroid muscles of the neck. The procedure enjoyed considerable success, but there were some horses that still cribbed after the operation. Cutting of additional musculature was possible, but the results were cosmetically unacceptable.
- The Modified Forssell's operation was designed to further prevent neck flexion by cutting the ventral branch of the accessory nerve. This preserves a substantial amount of the muscle mass, producing a cosmetically acceptable result.
- Due to the removal of the omohyoid and sternothyroid muscles, surgical drains must be placed and will require a varying level of postoperative care. A few days of hospitalization may be required, and a couple of follow-up visits by your regular veterinarian may be needed. Some simple at home nursing care will also be required and is easily accomplished by all horse owners. We will advise.
- The Range Animal Hospital takes equine surgery seriously with the availability of a specially equipped large animal operating room. We have a hydraulic operating table and gas anesthesia for our equine patients. Additionally, multi parameter monitoring equipment is available for our large animal patients.
- We prefer to do these procedures on Monday or Tuesday, with the horse returning home 1 to 3 days later. This is dependant on the amount of postoperative drainage from the incision.
- Cost is approximately \$1200 to \$1500. [January 2011]. This includes anesthesia, surgery and postoperative care, but not any needed pre-op blood work. Feel free to send clients with appropriate lab work.