

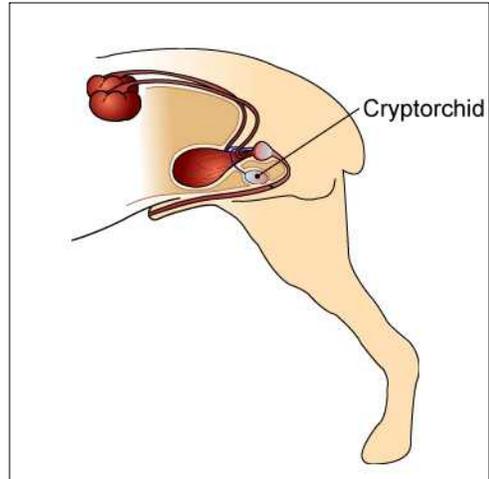
CRYPTORCHIDISM IN DOGS

What is cryptorchidism?

Cryptorchidism is the medical term that refers to the failure of one or both testes (testicles) to descend into the scrotum.

If the testicles aren't in the scrotum, where are they?

Most cases of cryptorchidism are the result of the testicle being retained in the inguinal canal or in the abdomen. In cases of inguinal cryptorchidism, the testicle may sometimes be felt underneath the skin inside the groin region. In cases of abdominal cryptorchidism, the testicle can not be felt from the outside. Abdominal ultrasound or radiographs may be performed to determine the exact location of the retained testicle.



What causes cryptorchidism?

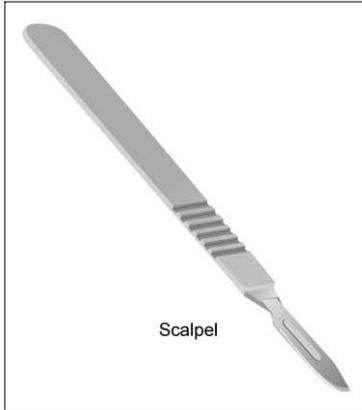
The testes normally descend into the scrotum by two months of age. In certain dogs, it may occur later, but rarely after six months of age. Cryptorchidism may be presumed to be present if the testicles aren't palpated in the scrotum after two months of age. Cryptorchidism is reported in all breeds, but the toy breeds, including toy poodles, Pomeranians and Yorkshire terriers, are at higher risk. Approximately seventy-five percent of the cases of cryptorchidism involve only one retained testicle while the remaining twenty-five percent involve failure of both testicles to descend into the scrotum. The right testicle is more than twice as likely to be retained as the left testicle. Cryptorchidism affects approximately 1.2% of all dogs. The condition is thought to be inherited although the exact mechanism is not fully understood.

What are the clinical signs of cryptorchidism?

This condition is rarely associated with pain or other clinical signs, unless a complication develops. In the event of a complication, such as spermatic cord torsion (twisting onto itself), there will be signs consistent with sudden and severe abdominal pain. Most often any clinical signs are associated with neoplasia or cancer.

What is the treatment for cryptorchidism?

Neutering and removal of the retained testicle is recommended as soon as your veterinarian feels it is safe for the dog to undergo surgery. The procedure normally involves making a second surgical approach over or near the retained testicle. If the retained testicle is intra-abdominal, the second incision will usually be made along the midline of the abdomen. In effect, your dog will undergo two surgical procedures for neutering instead of one.



What if I don't want to neuter my dog?

There are two good reasons for neutering a dog with cryptorchidism. The first is to remove the genetic defect from the breed line. Since cryptorchidism is an inherited defect, dogs with this condition should not be bred. Second, if the retained testicle is left in the body, the chances are increased that the dog will develop a testicular tumor (cancer) in the retained testicle. The risk of developing testicular neoplasia is estimated to be approximately ten times greater in dogs with cryptorchidism than in normal dogs. In fact, 53% of all Sertoli cell tumors and 36% of all seminomas occur in retained testicles. Additionally, 36% of all spermatic cord torsions are found in dogs with cryptorchidism.

What is the prognosis for a dog with cryptorchidism?

The prognosis is excellent for dogs that are diagnosed and undergo surgery early. The surgery is relatively simple and the outcomes are overwhelmingly positive. The prognosis for dogs that develop testicular neoplasia is guarded to poor and depends on the specific type of tumor and the dog's overall health at the time of diagnosis.

*This client information sheet is based on material written by Ernest Ward, DVM.
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