

Surgical treatment of open joint injuries: a retrospective study of 22 horses.

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Aims: To evaluate the prognosis of horses treated surgically for open joint injuries. **Methods:** The medical records of horses admitted for surgical treatment of a wound in communication with a joint were reviewed. A telephone questionnaire was used for the long term evaluation. Fisher's exact tests were used for the statistical analyses. **Results:** Twenty two horses were included in the study with the following distribution of lesions: 6 carpi, 6 fetlocks, 4 tibiotarsal joints, 2 proximal and 3 distal interphalangeal joints, 1 elbow. The duration of the injury before referral ranged from 3 hours to 10 days. Surgical treatment consisted of 1-3 joint lavages. Of the 22 horses, 4 were euthanatized during hospitalization and 18 were discharged. After discharge, 3 horses died due to colic, 2 were lost and 13 were still alive. The survival was not influenced by the duration of the wound. All horses with cutaneous defects less than 5 cm and all horses affected in the lower limb (below the level of the canon) were discharged. Having an affected joint proximal to the canon was significantly associated to the need of multiple surgeries (OR: 17.5; p= 0.024). **Conclusions:** Even if the prognosis remains guarded for open joint injuries, a long delay between injury and treatment should not be systematically associated with a bad prognosis for survival. Open joint injuries of the lower limb were associated with survival. They required less often multiple articular lavages than open joint injuries of the upper limb, warranting thus a better prognosis.