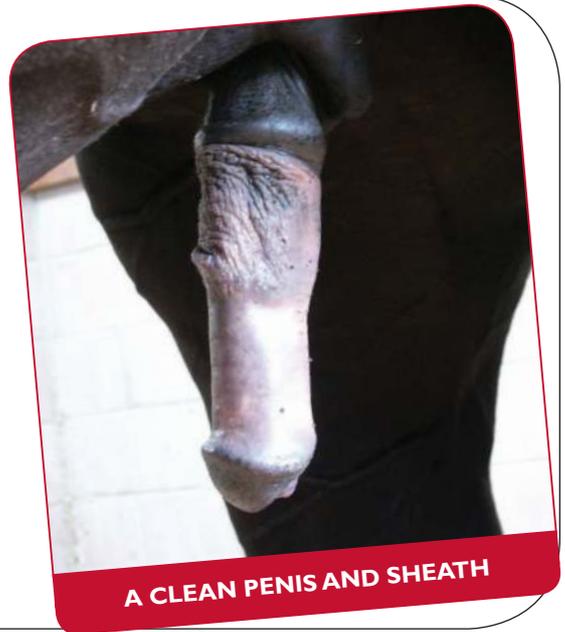


# Sheath Care for Geldings

The sheath of a gelding or stallion protects the penis when it is not extruded for urination or breeding. A wax-like substance called smegma is produced by the inside of the sheath to help to maintain healthy skin in this area and to make it easier for the penis to be extruded or withdrawn.



## How often should I clean the sheath?

- This will vary from horse to horse but, on average, every two to four weeks should be sufficient.
- Overcleaning should be avoided otherwise the normal bacteria are removed allowing fungal overgrowth to take place – a cursory wash is all that is required in most cases.
- Smegma can build up leading to discomfort, swelling or infection.
- Smegma build up is more common in the winter, especially if a horse is overweight as fat is partly stored in the sheath.
- Older geldings frequently have mildly swollen sheaths in the winter as they move around less and circulation in the sheath becomes poorer in the cold weather.
- The sheath can be safely cleaned by standing next to the elbow of the horse and gently wiping inside the sheath with a warm wet sponge.
- If the horse resents this procedure, a useful alternative is to smear KY Jelly inside the sheath which will loosen the smegma flakes.

## WHAT CAN I USE TO CLEAN A SHEATH?

- proprietary sheath cleaning fluid
- luke warm water
- KY jelly
- do not use any antiseptic such as Hibiscrub® as this will remove the natural bacteria.



The sheaths of geldings tend to 'stagnate' a little as they do not use the penis as often as a stallion might.

### SHEATH PROBLEMS

## What other problems may occur within the sheath?



'BEAN' IN URETHRAL FOSSA



AFTER 'BEAN' REMOVAL

- A 'bean' or 'pea' is a build-up of smegma in the urethral fossa, a small cavity in the tip of the penis. This can be painful and irritating – sedation may be necessary to allow its removal.
- Fungal or bacterial infections can cause pus to build up within the inside of the sheath.
- Melanomas or other tumours of the penis and sheath become more common as the horse gets older.

## When do I need to call my vet?

- If your horse's sheath is enlarged and does not reduce with cleaning and exercise.
- If you notice a discharge or smell from the sheath.
- If there are any growths on the penis or sheath.
- If your horse is having difficulty urinating or appears to be painful around the sheath.



SEVERELY INFECTED SHEATH



DISCHARGE ON INNER THIGH FROM DIRTY SHEATH



PENIS WITH NORMAL COATING OF SMEGMA



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For further information contact your local XLVets Equine practice:



**Penbode Equine vets - Serving Devon and Cornwall**  
**Holsworthy, Devon, 01409 255 549**  
**Okehampton, Devon, 01837 506 070**  
[www.penbodevets.co.uk](http://www.penbodevets.co.uk)