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Sporting Activity After Colic Surgery in Horses: A Retrospective Study

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A high proportion of horses discharged after colic surgery resumed or started a sporting activity, with a high proportion of those horses returning to their pre-surgical performance level. A large majority of owners of surgical colic horses would recommend surgery for colic horses. Authors’ address: Department of Large Animal Sciences (Andersen, Pihl, Tnibar, Christophersen) and Basic Sciences and Environment (Ekstrøm), Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Taastrup, Denmark; e-mail: mtc@life.ku.dk. *Presenting author. © 2011 AAEP.

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1. Introduction
There is a paucity of studies that follow the progression of horses after colic surgery resuming or starting sporting activity as well as the horse owner’s satisfaction with colic surgery. The objectives of this study were (1) to determine the survival rate after colic surgery, (2) to determine the prevalence of horses returning or starting sporting activity, (3) to assess the sporting performance as evaluated by the owners, and (4) to assess the owner’s satisfaction regarding colic surgery.

2. Materials and Methods
During the study period, we included all horses that had one or more celiotomies and were discharged after colic surgery. These cases were included in a telephone questionnaire and analyzed to compute a Kaplan–Meier survival curve. Only horses that survived at least 6 mo after colic surgery were included in the sporting activity analysis. A logistic regression model was used for the statistics.

3. Results and Discussion
Eighty-eight horses were discharged; 81 horses were included in the telephone questionnaire, and 79 horses met the inclusion criteria for the sporting activity analysis. Seventy-nine of eight-one horses included in the analysis of owner’s satisfaction regarding colic surgery survived more than 6 mo. Survival rates at 6, 12, 24, 36, 48, and 60 mo were 95.3%, 86.6%, 80.9%, 76.9%, 62.1%, and 57.6%, respectively; 68 of 79 horses (86.1%) resumed or started a sporting activity after colic surgery. The proportion of horses that owners believed to achieve the same or better performance after surgery was 83.5%. In 89.9% of the cases, owners would recommend colic surgery.