

# Survey of “Standards of Surgery” in Veterinary Practice

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## Introduction

Standards of surgical practice are not well defined in veterinary medicine as a profession. These issues are largely addressed in the course of litigation and often hinge upon the personal opinion of board certified experts working in controlled settings. We expect that the standards of surgical practice in an idealized setting bear little resemblance to that utilized in field settings in bovine practice. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into current “standards of surgery” among veterinarians in private practice.

## Materials and Methods

Electronic survey distributed via e-lists of large animal veterinarians. Practitioners were asked to answer 12 questions regarding surgical procedures.

## Results

194 practitioners responded. Q1: Hair removal? 86% clipped, 13% shave. Q2: Preparation of skin? 47% use iodine products, 25% chlohexidine, 23% antiseptic soap, 3% soap. Q3: Method of scrubbing? 41% until clean, 25% - 1 to 5 minutes, 7% - 6 to 10 minutes, 3% three cycle

scrub. Q4: Surgery cap? 90% no, 7% yes, 2% in clinic only, not at farm. Q5a: Surgery gown? 77% no, 19% yes, 2% abdomen only. Q5b: Sleeves? 43% sterile, 40% clean. Q6: Face mask? 91% no, 6% yes. Q7: Wear gloves? 87% yes, 9% no. Q8: Where performed? 69% on-farm, 10% haul-in, 21% both. Q9: Anesthesia? 40% combination methods, 12% paravertebral, 11% lineblock/sedation, 10% lineblock, 5% inverted-L block/sedation, 4% inverted-L block, 3% line-block/epidural, 3% inverted-L block/epidural. Q10: Analgesia? 30% no, 19% rarely, 7% routinely. What drug? 53% flunixin, 23% NSAID, 40% butorphenol, 21% xylazine. Q11: Antibiotic protocol? 76% routinely, 24% selected cases. Q12: Post-op monitoring? 59% set protocol, 39% “owner knows to call”, 3% none.

## Significance

Demands on veterinarians to safe-guard patients from unnecessary pain or distress are increasing. This survey uncovers “standards of surgical practice” being used in the field by practitioners today. This may help gain insight for future implementation of practices to optimize patient recovery and minimize discomfort associated with surgery.