

Intrasynovial Anesthesia:

General Considerations

Deposition of local anesthetics into synovial structures is commonly employed to specifically identify the region(s) causing pain in the lame limb. Intrasynovial injections of medications are also commonly employed to treat a variety of joint, tendon sheath, and bursal conditions. Injection of saline into synovial cavities also can be helpful to determine whether traumatic injuries have penetrated the synovial structure. Knowing several different approaches to these synovial cavities can be very helpful, depending on the location of the injury.

Skin Preparation

Techniques for preparing the skin for intrasynovial injections vary among clinicians. Many clip the hair over the injection site, although this has been shown to be unnecessary if an adequate sterile preparation of the site is performed. Regardless, a minimum 5-minute sterile scrub of the site using an antiseptic (povidone-iodine or chlorhexidine) and alcohol or saline should be performed. Sterile gloves are recommended also.

Restraint

The type of physical restraint depends on the disposition of the horse and the skill of the veterinarian. Twitch restraint is recommended to perform all intrasynovial injections unless it is not tolerated by the horse. Horses being treated by intrasynovial injections often are routinely tranquilized, but this is not usually possible for injections used for diagnostic purposes. In addition, the smallest gauge needle as possible (usually 20 gauge or smaller) should be used to minimize objection by the horse. Most blocks are performed out of the stocks, but in selected instances stocks can be helpful. Examples include the sacroiliac and coxofemoral joints.