**Cryptorchid Anatomy**

In the fetal colt, the testes descend from the abdominal cavity through the inguinal canal to the scrotum just prior to birth or within 2 weeks after. The entrance of the canal from the abdominal cavity, the deep inguinal ring, is located at the caudal border of the internal abdominal oblique muscle. The canal terminates externally at an opening in the aponeurosis of the external abdominal oblique muscle, called the *superficial inguinal ring*.

* If one or both testes fails to reach the scrotum, it may remain within the abdomen or the canal itself resulting in cryptorchidism.
* If the testis has traversed the vaginal ring but has not reached the scrotum, the horse is considered an **inguinal cryptorchid (“high flanker”).**
* If the testis has not traversed the vaginal ring and has not descended into the inguinal canal, the horse is considered an **abdominal cryptorchid**. In this case, the vaginal process with the attached gubernaculum will usually be developed and it may be inverted into the abdominal cavity or descended into the canal.

Cryptorchidism may be unilateral or bilateral and, in cases of inguinal cryptorchids, may spontaneously resolve itself after a year or more following birth. Horses with abdominal testis(es) will not spontaneously resolve. If the condition does not resolve, then surgical removal of the retained testis(es) is necessary.

For both the inguinal and paraguinal approaches, a thorough understanding of the orientation of the gonadal structures is crucial to successfully locating the testis. In particular, the surgeon relies on the attachment between the tail of the epididymis and the vaginal process to do so.