Why does my gelding drop his stuff?

Geldings may drop their penis for a variety of reasons. My old gelding always dropped his penis and developed a moderate erection at feeding time. As soon as he started eating his grain, all things returned to normal. Geldings may drop their penis during the act of urination. I have also observed geldings dropping their penis if their sheath is dirty with dead skin and flakes. They may accumulate a “bean” in the small sinuses or cavities surrounding the end of the penis around the urethra. This bean is made up of dead cells and waxy secretions. If large, the bean may interfere with your horse’s ability to urinate a continuous stream of urine. Geldings should have their sheath and penis examined annually during a health checkup.

Literature includes comments about geldings dropping their penis or developing an erection during training. There are no reports of the exact reason for this response, and no studies have been done to identify why this may be occurring.

Geldings do develop periodic spontaneous erections, which are not in response to any observed stimulus. They may also develop an erection and bump their penis against their abdomen which is a masturbation behavior. Geldings masturbate just as stallions do, however, with decreased frequency compared to stallions (which is about every 90 or so minutes, by the way). Ejaculation RARELY occurs with masturbation behavior in geldings. Geldings are also reported to develop an erection as a sexual response to a mare.

Certain diseases or injuries can affect the nervous system control of the penis muscles that normally hold the penis in the sheath. Bladder stones and/or urinary tract infections may also be associated with the gelding dropping his penis. Chronic pain elsewhere in the body can also cause the gelding to drop his penis.

If you are concerned about your horse’s behavior, consult your veterinarian. Take note whether the penis is dropped in a relaxed state or if there is an erection. Take note of the environmental conditions when this occurs. Is your horse alone or in the company of other specific horses? Your veterinarian will examine the sheath and penis during a detailed medical examination. Veterinary behaviorists often utilize video to help with horses that have no health reason for their behavior.