

**SOP No:** ATT 053

**SUBJECT:** Sedation in Horses

**POLICY:** This procedure may only be performed by operators who have been educated in the correct techniques, and under the supervision of their skilled Demonstrator. Leather boots and clean overalls must be worn.

**PRECAUTIONS:** The horse will be suitably restrained by a skilled handler standing on the same side of the horse as the operator. A skin or nose twitch will be used if additional restraint is required.

**EQUIPMENT:** Halter & lead  
Twitch  
19 – 21 Gauge Needles  
1.0 ml syringes  
2.5 ml syringes  
Alcohol Swabs  
Xylazine 100 mg/ml or  
Detomidine 10 mg/ml or  
Romifidine 10 mg/ml  
Butorphanol 10 mg/ml

**PROCEDURE:**

1. The choice of sedative is based on the procedure to be performed and the general demeanour of horse. Xylazine is selected for short procedures, Romifidine is selected for procedures where ataxia needs to be minimized (such as creating radiographs), and Detomidine is selected for longer procedures or for horses with an unsuitable demeanour. Butorphanol may be combined with any of these drugs to increase the degree of sedation. All operators should be aware of appropriate dose rates for each of these drugs.
2. The vein is identified and swabbed with alcohol. The vein is occluded with digital pressure in the jugular groove.
3. A needle is placed into the middle third and in the centre of the jugular vein at a 45° angle. When blood flows out of the needle, the needle is flattened to be parallel to the vein and is advanced to the hub.
4. The operator confirms the needle is in the jugular vein and not the carotid artery by occluding the vein to encourage blood flow out of the needle and by assessing the type of flow of blood out the needle (dripping NOT spurting).
5. The syringe containing the sedative is then attached to the needle and the operator draws back on the syringe to confirm it is still in the vein. A small volume of sedative is injected and then position is again confirmed by drawing back on the syringe. This process is repeated until all the sedative as been administered.

6. At completion of the injection, digital pressure over the vein is released and the needle is then withdrawn from the vein. Gentle pressure is applied over the venipuncture site until bleeding stops.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**DATE ISSUED:** 24.06.2009

**REVISED:**

**REFERENCES:**

1. Rose, R.J. and Hodgson, D.R. Manual of Equine Practice. pp 754-755. Second Edition. W.B. Saunders. Philadelphia. 2000.