Evaluation of post-operative complications following routine feline orchidectomies using plucking versus clipping for hair removal

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Introduction

Feline orchidectomy is a routine procedure in small animal practice. Pre-operative hair removal improves surgical site visualisation and facilitates preparation, but different hair-removal methods may influence tissue trauma, pain and wound healing.

Clipping is widely used but may cause superficial skin abrasions, while plucking removes hair mechanically from the follicle. There is limited veterinary evidence directly comparing their post-operative effects.

Aim:

To evaluate whether clipping or plucking influenced post-operative pain, behaviour and wound appearance following routine feline orchidectomy.

Methods

Prospective observational study conducted in a clinical setting.

Cats undergoing routine orchidectomy
(n = 12)

- **Clipping** n = 5
- **Plucking** n = 7

Immediate post-operative assessment
n = 12

Day 2
n = 9

Day 10
n = 3

Allocation

Hair removal method based on preparation nurse preference as part of standard surgical preparation.

Outcome measures

Pain
Glasgow Composite Measure Pain Scale-Feline (CMPS-F)

Behaviour
Food intake, handling tolerance and cage position

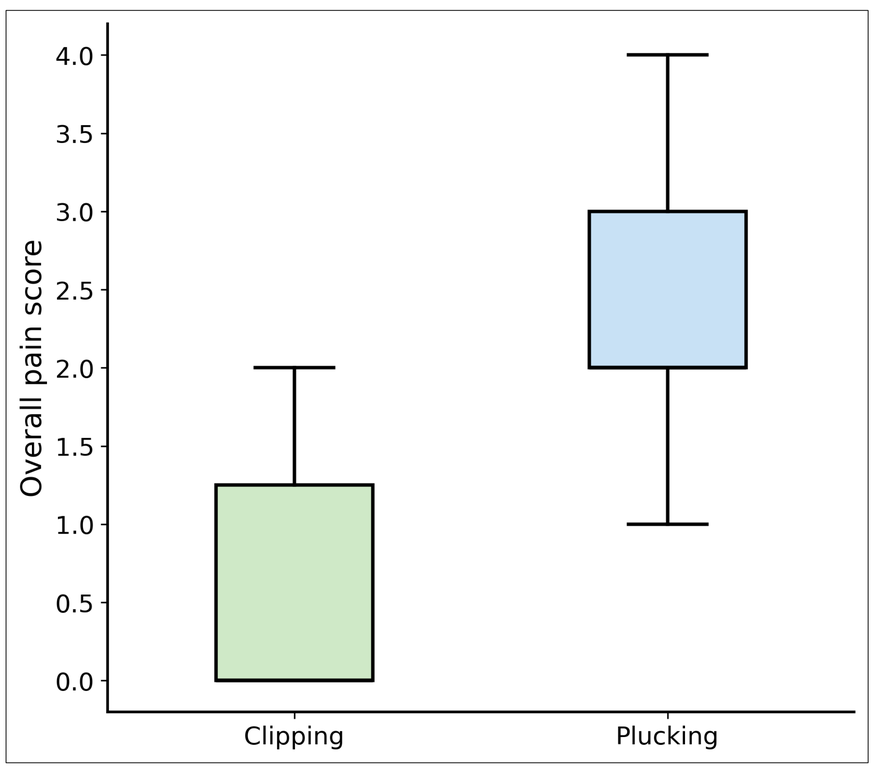
Wound appearance
Bruising, swelling and discharge

Statistical analysis

Mann-Whitney U test and Fisher's Exact Test

Results

Immediate post-operative pain scores



Pain scores were significantly higher following plucking.
Clipping: median = 0 (range 0-2)
Plucking: median = 2 (range 1-4)
Mann-Whitney U = 3.0, P = 0.015

Other immediate post-operative findings

Outcome	Clipping (n = 5)	Plucking (n = 7)
Eating	2/5 (40%)	2/7 (28.6%)
Handled	5/5 (100%)	6/7 (85.7%)
Front of cage	5/5 (100%)	4/7 (57.1%)
Bruising	0/5 (0%)	2/7 (28.6%)

No swelling or discharge was observed in either group
No statistically significant associations were identified for these categorical outcomes (P > 0.05)

Follow up findings

Day 2 (n = 9)
- Median pain score 0 in both groups
- No bruising, swelling or discharge observed

Day 10 (n = 3)
- No clear wound abnormalities observed
- Findings should be interpreted cautiously due to the small follow-up sample

Discussion/Conclusion

What did we find?

Plucking was associated with significantly higher immediate post-operative pain scores compared with clipping (P = 0.015).

What might it mean?

Mechanical hair removal from the follicle and associated tissue irritation may contribute to greater immediate post-operative discomfort.

Key limitations

- Small sample size
- Observational (non-randomised) study
- Subjective outcome measures
- Loss to follow-up (12 → 9 → 3)
- Later findings should be interpreted cautiously

Overall conclusion

Clipping may be preferable where immediate post-operative comfort is a priority, but larger and more robust studies are required before firm clinical recommendations can be made.

References

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