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ANIMAL KINGDOM'S SURGERY GOES SMOOTHLY AT NEW BOLTON CENTER DERBY WINNER GIVEN STRONG CHANCE TO RETURN AT HIGHEST LEVEL 90-DAY RECOVERY BEGINS AT FAIR HILL WITH FEW WEEKS OF STALL REST

Kentucky Derby winner Animal Kingdom has come through surgery on June 30 in good order, reports Barry Irwin, CEO of Team Valor International.

Dr. Dean Richardson performed the operation that required two screws to be inserted to compress a hairline slab fracture that was discovered with a CAT scan.



“The leg would have healed on its own,” explained the vet, from his headquarters at the University of Pennsylvania’s New Bolton Center. “But by using screws, we will have a more reliable, consistent time schedule for healing and have given the horse his best chance to minimize any arthritis that might occur in the leg had we just let nature do its job.”

Dr. Richardson was optimistic that Animal Kingdom would be able to return to racing at the same high level.

Animal Kingdom was back at Team Valor International’s barn at Fair Hill training center over the Fourth of July holiday. The Leroidesanimaux colt will have a couple of weeks of stall rest, during which period his only time out of his stall will be to graze at the Maryland training complex.

Plans call for the chestnut to begin walking in a couple of weeks and for him to begin exercising on a water treadmill for 30 days following 60 days of rehabilitation. The colt will return to training after 90 days of inactivity.

Dr. Richardson explained that when Animal Kingdom was first diagnosed, he had two sites that concerned him. One appeared to be a fissure and the other was too diffused to make an accurate call, which is why he asked for the leg to be radiographed again after a period of two weeks.

Through use of a CAT scan, Dr. Dean Richardson discovered an additional hairline fracture in the site of the slab fracture of the left hock, which meant that he would insert two screws instead of one to stabilize the area.

“Dean said that in the final analysis, the extra hairline meant nothing, but he noted it just to show how important it is to have the use of the scan available, because until these surgeons go in there, nobody knows what they will find for sure,” trainer Graham Motion said. “He says he expects no complications from this event.”

Asked if he thought that both injury sites in the left hind leg were new, Dr. Richardson said, “We never know on these things. It is possible that the fissure we first noted might have been there, but nobody ever knows for sure. But it is pretty certain that the slab occurred in his last race, because clinically he was lame and he was not before that. The micro fracture or fissure is so small that in 95 percent of cases with horses that have something this small, it would never show up even if we radiographed it. Most horses that would have something this minor never show any signs and they just live with it.”