

and hospital stay will cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000 and the prosthesis will add another \$5,000. “Beyond the costs, there is an enormous commitment of time that’s required,” says Vlahos. “You will never sell this horse and he will require hands-on care every day for the rest of his life.” Perhaps Grant sums it up best: “If you’re not going to go into it fully committed and prepared to see it through for years and years—physically and emotionally as well as financially—don’t do it at all. It’s not fair to the horse.”

The details of surgery

Before an amputation is performed, the horse must be medically stable, particularly in the case of an acute injury. “I don’t think it’s a great idea to rush [a prosthesis candidate] from the racetrack to surgery, even if you know that’s where you’ll end up,” says Grant. “It’s much smarter to apply a cast and give the horse a day or two to stabilize while you get yourself organized for what lies ahead.”

Grant uses that time to condition the horse to the sling that will become a critical part of the recovery process. With the injured limb stabilized in a full-length sling or cast, the horse is lightly sedated and placed in the sling for one or two short



MODEL PATIENT:

Twelve years after losing her hind hoof in an accident, Josie is “thriving on very little maintenance, beyond replacing her artificial leg whenever she wears one out,” reports Ric Redden, DVM. “She is turned out full-time with other horses and has been since she got her very first prosthetic.” Josie is now wearing her fourth artificial limb (above), which Redden describes as one of his simpler designs.