

Castration

Castration is the surgical removal of testicles and this can be carried out at any age once both testicles have descended. Most commonly castrations are carried out between 6–18 months of age and are traditionally done in the Spring due to favourable weather conditions.

What to Expect

Castration can be carried out at your yard or in the clinic. The colt will be given pain relief antibiotics and tetanus anti-toxin (if not already vaccinated). The colt will be sedated, and the procedure carried out either standing or under general anaesthetic depending on the colt's temperament and size. This decision will be discussed beforehand with your vet. The scrotum is thoroughly cleaned and prepared for surgery. Local anaesthetic is injected into the testicles followed by surgical removal. The colt is then allowed to recover, if this is done under standing sedation this will take between 1 and 2 hours. If this is carried out under general anaesthetic the horse will stay asleep until they are ready to get back up, the time frame for this can be very varied depending on the individual. The vet will not leave the yard until they are happy the patient is stable and comfortable.

Post-Operative Management and Potential Complications

- Colts may be able to cover mares and get them in foal for a short period following castration hence we recommend they are kept away from mares for 4 – 6 weeks post-surgery.
- **Management:**
 - Close monitoring of scrotum to check for any complications.
 - Exercise. Following castration, we expect the scrotum to have some soft swelling and this can be reduced in size with exercise to allow drainage and increase circulation. If turnout is not an option, we advise hand walking and lunging.
 - Keep site clean. We do not routinely advise active cleaning of the incision sites however turn out in a dry paddock and stabling in clean bedding can help minimise contamination risks.



- **Possible complications include:**
 - Any abnormal tissue protruding from the wound requires immediate attention so please phone us immediately if you notice this as this can be serious.
 - Bleeding. We will not leave until any bleeding has stopped or reduced to an insignificant level. However, bleeding can restart at a later time. If there is a fast drip of blood, contact us if it is not slowing within an hour. If a continuous stream of blood is not stopping within 2 – 3 minutes, we should be contacted. Sometimes fluid will accumulate within the scrotum and be released in a gush as the horse shifts his weight. This should be clearly stopping in 15 – 20 seconds.
 - Swelling. Likelihood of swelling increases with size and age of the horse. Any swelling WILL NOT PREVENT URINATION. It takes 2 forms:
 - Swelling of the sheath occurs in the first 2-3 days after castration due to prevention of tissue fluid drainage from that area. It causes discomfort which causes the horse to stand feeling sorry for himself which allows more swelling and a vicious circle ensues. Exercise has a massaging effect which reduces swelling. If swelling exceeds the size of a double handful (depending on the size of the colt) contact us for further treatment.
 - Swelling at the scrotum can occur 4-5 days after castration and many indicate post-operative infection. If the scrotum exceeds a double fistful in size or the horse becomes dull and inappetent we should be contacted.

Castrations are a routine surgery which we carry out regularly and safely taking all the essential precautions to minimise the risk of complications however it is important to know these potential complications do exist. If you are unsure of anything following a castration or have any more questions, please give us a call at the clinic.

