

# CASTRATION

---

Equine castration is probably the most commonly performed routine surgical procedure in the horse.

Castrating a colt is usually performed for ease of management and to aid unwanted breeding. As some colts get older they can become difficult to handle, with some becoming dangerous.

Castration can be carried out by two methods, the choice dependent upon age, size, temperament and history of the animal.

- **OPEN CASTRATION – this is the most commonly performed method of castration and is the preferred method within the practice.** It can be performed **STANDING** under heavy sedation and local anaesthetic, or under a short general anaesthetic.

**PROCEDURE** – 2 incisions are made, one over each testicle and the testicle exteriorized completely. The blood vessels and spermatic cord are crushed using emasculators. There are no sutures and the wounds are allowed to drain and heal naturally.



Standing castration is not safe in very small ponies or colts that are difficult to handle and in these cases a short general anaesthetic is given.

- **CLOSED CASTRATION – this involves a general anaesthetic in an operating theatre. This is generally for much older mature horses as the closed method reduces the risk of haemorrhage.**

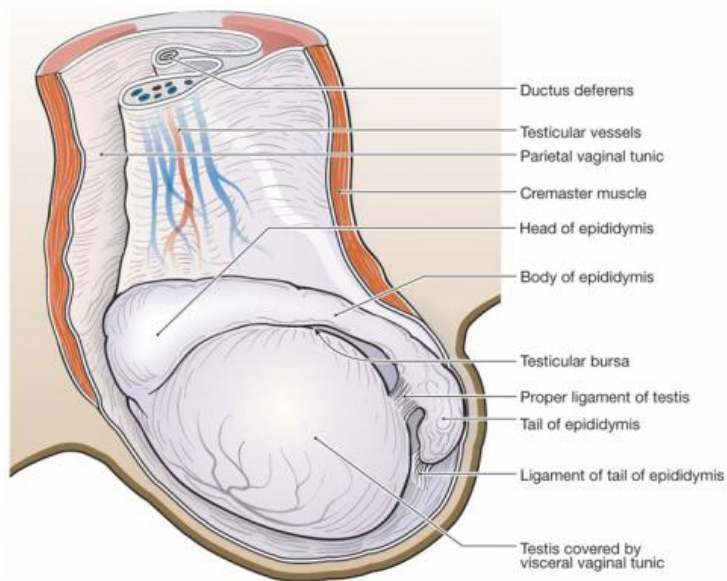
Colts can be castrated at any age. Ideally as a practice we would recommend between 6-18 months. Generally young colts recover faster and tend to have fewer postoperative complications.

Time of year is important when considering castration – flies and muddy conditions must be taken into consideration, both of which can contribute to wound infection. Consequently we advise performing castrates in spring or autumn but we are happy to perform them outside of these times depending on the circumstances and facilities present.

It is recommended that the colt is vaccinated against tetanus prior to castration otherwise tetanus antitoxin will be administered at the time of surgery at extra cost.

**MEDICATION** – all horses are given antibiotics and pain relief at the time of the procedure and we generally dispense a longer course of antibiotics and Bute post operatively.

Please note that live sperm can remain in the tubes to the penis immediately following castration therefore we advise that colts are not turned with mares for approximately 8 weeks following castration.



## **EQUINE CASTRATION POST OPERATIVE CARE**

After castration (open technique) there will usually be two open surgical incisions in the scrotum. These are generally left open in order to allow drainage and prevent excessive swelling/infection of the area.

After castration it is advisable to keep the horse/pony stabled for approximately 24 hours before being turned out as normal into a clean paddock to enable him to move around and to help disperse any swelling at the castration site.

If turnout is difficult, or the horse/pony has to be stabled, then walking out in hand or lunging for 10-20 minutes 3-4 times daily is advised in order to limit scrotal swelling and aid wound drainage.

A tail bandage will have been applied during the castration procedure, ideally keep on for 3-4 days in order to reduce contamination of the castration site.

DEMEANOR – once the sedative or anaesthetic has worn off the horse/pony should appear normal. If he appears dull, depressed, inappetent or extremely lethargic then call the practice immediately.

HAEMORRHAGE/BLEEDING – some bleeding following the procedure is normal but this should not be excessive. An occasional drip of a bloody serous type discharge is normal and drip rate should not be more than 1 DRIP/MINUTE. It may continue to drip for a few days. IF THERE IS RAPID DRIPPING OR YOU CANNOT COUNT THE DRIPS THEN CALL THE PRACTICE IMMEDIATELY.

SWELLING – some swelling is normal and maximum swelling usually occurs at 4-7 days after castration. The scrotum can swell to a size similar to before castration and this can travel forward to the sheath. Generally the swelling should not be more than the size of a large grapefruit and it may take 1-2 weeks to disperse. Turnout to encourage moving around and gentle exercise should help to reduce the swelling but if you feel that it is excessive or the horse/pony is uncomfortable and unable to walk comfortably then call the practice immediately. Generally older horses/ponies will swell considerably more than colts of 1 year or less.



Excessive or purulent discharge can indicate a problem –if you are concerned please contact the practice immediately.

If the horse/pony is amenable then gently bathe the scrotum daily using warm water with a dilute solution of hibiscrub. DO NOT HOSE the incisions.

Legs may be washed to remove any blood or discharge.

PROTRUSIONS FROM THE INCISIONS – occasionally blood clots will protrude from the wounds but anything else is abnormal. The wounds in the scrotum communicate directly with the abdominal cavity therefore anything protruding from the wounds may not be normal and it is advisable that you contact the practice immediately.

## **COMPLICATIONS**

PLEASE CONTACT THE PRACTICE IF

- THE HORSE IS INAPPETANT OR DEPRESSED
- SIGNS OF COLIC ARE NOTED
- ANY TISSUE IS HANGING OUT OF SCROTUM
- IF BLOOD DRIPS FASTER THAN 1 DRIP PER SECOND
- PUS TYPE DISCHARGE AT CASTRATION SITE
- EXCESSIVE SWELLING THAT DOES NOT RESOLVE AFTER 1-2 WEEKS

Please contact Kings Bounty Equine Practice on **01420 520164** if you have any further questions or wish to arrange a castration.