



Standing Colt Castration

What does castration involve?

Most colts are castrated under "standing sedation". This involves the administration of a sedative injection and then injecting local anaesthetic into both testicles and the surrounding tissues, to ensure pain is not present during the procedure. This technique is cheaper, can easily be performed at most yards and requires less time than a general anaesthetic.

The procedure usually takes around 30 minutes- 1 hour. Both testicles are sterilely removed via separate incisions (cuts) in the scrotum. A special piece of equipment is applied to the blood vessels for several minutes before the testicle is removed to minimise bleeding and "clamp" the blood vessels off. The skin incisions are left open and not stitched to allow draining of any blood and fluid.

In some circumstances it may be necessary for the administration of a general anaesthetic for castration, for example older stallions, some draught breeds, donkeys, unhandled colts or colts where one or more testicles are not yet fully descended/ dropped. This is more involved and is not discussed in this fact sheet.

Why should I castrate my colt?

Castration reduces or eliminates masculine behaviour which often makes horses more manageable.

At what age should colts be castrated?

We generally recommend castration from 6 months of age. Older stallions (over 4 years old) may require a different technique, where general anaesthesia may be required. Generally colts will reach sexual maturity at 15- 18 months old, however some will reach puberty earlier and can therefore successfully cover mares. Care must be taken to separate colts from fillies and mares before they reach sexual maturity to avoid unwanted pregnancy!

What should I do before my colt is castrated?

If you can safely do so, check that 2 testicles are present! If your colt does not appreciate you checking (which many don't!) ask your vet to check when they are at the yard. Most colts will have both testicles present at birth; however some may take several months to descend. If both are not present by a year of age, they are unlikely to descend and more involved surgery is required for castration.

Are my premises suitable?

We ask that owners have an enclosed safe area to perform standing castration, away from other horses. A stable or covered yard with a clean straw bed is ideal. A field can be used in some circumstances, but poor weather conditions will adversely affect the sterility of the procedure and it is best avoided. In dry conditions, where a good grass covering of the field is present, a field may be suitable. Ideally the colt should be relatively clean prior to the procedure. The best times of year for castration are when the field conditions are reasonable and when flies are less likely to be an issue (this can be difficult to predict!). After the procedure the horse/ pony will be required to be turned out in a field or pen to exercise, and reduce any potential swelling.

Does he need to be vaccinated prior to castration?

If your colt is not vaccinated, immediate cover for tetanus can be given at the time of castration.



Can my colt still cover mares?

After castration colts can still **successfully** cover mares for approximately 4 weeks.

Are there complications with castration?

Yes, minor complications can arise and are fairly common, but more serious complications are uncommon. The main complications are bleeding, localised swelling, infection and exposed tissue. Please see our post-operative castration care sheet for more information.