

Unit 22: Castration Factsheet

Introduction

To castrate a male animal means that the testicles' function is stopped by preventing production of male hormones so that the animal is unable to reproduce. It involves crushing the spermatic cord (*vas deferens*) and sometimes the removal of the testicle.

Castration

i) Beef calves are castrated

- To prevent them from mating after they have reached puberty
- Because steers are usually more docile and easier to control than bulls
- Because steers are finished sooner than bulls.

ii) Ram lambs are castrated

- To prevent them from mating after they have reached puberty
- Quicker finishing rate
- Better eating quality

Methods of castration

There are 3 main methods of castration:

1. The burdizzo
2. The rubber ring
3. Surgical castration

1. The burdizzo method

- Also known as bloodless castrator or emasculator
- Named after its inventor
- Blunt pair of pliers
- Two blunt crushing surfaces cut the blood vessel and the spermatic cord inside the scrotal sac
- Scrotal sac itself is not cut
- Result is that the two testicles shrivel up and die
- Swelling can occur, but there is little chance of infection.

2. The rubber ring or elastrator

- Tight rubber ring is placed above the testicles
- It grips the neck of the scrotal sac
- It cuts off the blood supply
- In time the testicle and the scrotal sac will shrivel up and fall away
- Small chance of infection
- Small scar left when the sac falls away.

3. Surgical castration

- an incision is made into the scrotal sac
- the spermatic cord is cut
- blood vessel is ripped out
- testicles removed
- great risk of infection
- open wound

	Burdizzo	Rubber ring	Surgical method
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloodless • Less risk of infection • No chance of maggot infestation in summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloodless • Less risk of infection • Calves are handled easily and little labour is involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castration is irreversible because the testicles are removed
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painful if no anaesthetic used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small scar left could attract flies or the animal picks up tetanus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood loss • High risk of infection • Not suitable for summer

Summary of laws of castration

- it is an offence to castrate calves which have reached two months of age without the use of an anaesthetic
- the use of a rubber ring, or other device, to restrict the flow of blood to the scrotum, is only permitted without an anaesthetic if the device is applied during the first week of life
- only a veterinary surgeon may castrate a calf which has reached the age of two months
- castration should not be performed on lambs until the ewe/lamb bond has become established
- once a lamb is over three months old, castration may only be performed by a veterinary surgeon using a suitable anaesthetic
- it is an offence to castrate lambs which have reached three months of age without the use of an anaesthetic