

Surgical Procedure: COLT CASTRATION PREPARATION

Important Preparation Instructions:

- ☑ Colts that are going to be castrated under **general anaesthetic** require total **starvation for 8 - 12 hours** prior to the anaesthetic with water withheld for only the last hour.
- ☑ Colts that are going to be castrated **standing** should ideally be **starved for two hours**.
- ☑ Therefore, unless your colt has been starved for 8 - 12 hours the only technique available on the day would be a standing castration. If a recumbent castration (open or closed) was deemed to be required this could be booked in for a later date.
- ☑ **Remember:** you cannot be certain your colt has been fully starved if he has been on a straw bed. The operation however, can be performed in either a straw or shavings bed. In addition, either bedding is suitable for after the operation.
- ☑ **Ensure you're available for the full day that your colt is to be castrated** to allow for close monitoring in the immediate post-operative period. Checks should be performed at least every half hour and should include a close look at the groin area. Be aware, though, of trying not to unduly distress him in this period as this can be associated with a greater risk of bleeding (see after care sheet).

Castration Procedure Information:



There are a variety of ways in which to categorise the method used to castrate a colt, but two of the more commonly used categorisations are:

1. Standing; under sedation
2. Recumbent; under general anaesthetic

In addition to this, there are two main ways to perform the castrate; either OPEN or CLOSED. This refers to whether or not we incise (cut) into the sack which goes around the testicle. In our practice we typically perform the castration OPEN. This means your colt will be left with two incisions (holes) through which any blood etc can drain.

CLOSED castrations can only be properly performed on a colt that is recumbent (under general anaesthetic) and positioned on his back (as opposed to lying flat out). Standing sedations are always done OPEN. The majority of castrations we do at Agnew Equine are standing, open castrations.

General Information:

Our experienced vets come to your home stable to perform a castration procedure, removing the time & stress and any need to transport.

Colts are generally castrated for 2 reasons; to prevent unwanted pregnancy, or to make them easier to handle and safer to run with other horses.

We recommend spring or autumn as the best time for castrating, although exceptions can be made if necessary. In spring and autumn, flies are less of an issue than the summer, and by comparison it is less cold, wet & muddy than the winter - and both these scenarios increase the risk of infection.

Castrations are usually performed under standing sedation but occasionally a general anaesthetic may be required for the procedure to be performed safely. Reasons for doing it down would be either size of the pony (i.e. Shetland), size of the testicles (too small), temperament of the horse (too risky for the vet) or if you have a donkey.

Insurance

Whilst insurance companies will not cover the cost of castration, they may cover the costs associated with any complications that may arise including the value of the animal. If your colt is insured then please liaise with them prior to the surgery being performed.

Alternatively, if your colt is not insured you may want to consider taking it out prior to the surgery being performed.

Castration Risks

No matter which technique is used, there will always be an element of risk associated with the procedure. In general the risks become greater with age and are greater for bigger horses. The final method used to castrate your colt will be dictated by a risk assessment. This can only be completed once the colt has had a pre castration examination.

The main risk associated with recumbent castration (an open or closed technique) is the need for a general anaesthetic. In general, horses are not a “good species” for a general anaesthetic. As a result most vets will avoid their use if at all possible.

A standing castration (always open) also involves risk. The main risk here is associated with bleeding. In a very small number of cases it can also be associated with the risk of abdominal tissue coming down through the open sack. Most vets would agree that the risks / complications associated with a standing castration are fewer than those associated with a recumbent castration. As a result most colts are castrated by the standing open technique. If however the pre castration examination identifies a problem in the groin area e.g. scrotal hernia or large inguinal rings etc then a recumbent closed castration would be advised.

If you are suspicious that your colt may have had a scrotal hernia when he was younger then inform the vet as soon as possible. Other colts that are often castrated in a recumbent position are miniature breeds (because of poor access in the standing position) and those colts whose temperament precludes castration whilst standing, even when heavily sedated – the vet is also at risk!

Vaccination & Worming Advice

If they are not already vaccinated for tetanus, your colt will be given tetanus antiserum at the time of the operation as the bacteria can enter the body through open wounds - but long term tetanus protection can only be achieved by a course of vaccinations. If you've not already done so, we would advise a course of flu & tetanus vaccinations, and this could be started on the day of the castration.

Do not worm your colt immediately prior to or for one week following his castration.