

CLIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

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CASTRATION

Overview

Castration is the most common procedure performed on domestic animals. It is primarily a husbandry practice to eliminate aggressive behavior and improve carcass yield. In food producing animals, castration is usually performed by lay people using bloodless techniques at young age. Castration without pain management (analgesia) is a subject of debate. Castration of older or cryptorchid animals requires deep sedation and local anesthesia or general anesthesia.

Species and Animal Groups Affected

All males of non-breeding quality

Calves: 2 to 4 months of age

Kids and lambs: 1 week of age

Castration of show or pet animals may be delayed to avoid risk for urethral stones

Castration is generally delayed in companion camelids (15 to 18 months of age in llamas and alpacas, 2 years in camels) in order to avoid complications associated with early castration (tall leggy animals predisposed to osteoarticular problems).

Unilateral castration may be indicated in breeding males with unilateral testicular problems

Signs

Only healthy animals should be submitted for routine castration on the farm.

Causes

Routine castration is mostly a convenience (pet animals) or a husbandry (feeding) practice.

Unilateral castration is indicated in valuable male with unilateral testicular problems (tumors, inflammation etc...).

Risk Factors

Poor genetic quality

Undesirable male behavior in companion animals

Treatment

The most commonly used methods for routine castration of young animals is the use of elastrator bands or Burdizzo emasculatome to cutoff the blood supply to the testicles.

Surgical castration by removing the bottom third of the scrotum is practiced in a ranch/farm setting but has become controversial without the use of analgesia. In general, healthy,

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vaccinated animals submitted to castration at young age do not require any special treatments following castration.

Older sexually mature animals or animals with testicular disorders should be castrated surgically under anesthesia or deep sedation and local anesthesia and require more advanced post-surgical care.

Management Considerations

In sheep production system castration is performed at the same time as docking

Animals should be healthy and vaccinated against clostridial diseases and particularly tetanus

Owners should be aware of the welfare issues associated with the practice of castration without analgesia

Castrated animals should be monitored for any pain ((lameness), excessive bleeding or swelling.

Camelids castrated later in life may retain some male breeding behavior (mounting and even erection)

Expected Course and Prognosis

Castration of young animals using bands, Burdizzo or surgical excision of the bottom of the scrotum is associated with low complications rate if done properly on healthy animals

Possible complications include severe edema or maintenance of the testis due to error in placement of the bands .

Hemorrhage and wound infection is possible if the procedure is not performed adequately.

Notes

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