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## The Dick Vet Equine Practice

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### COLT CASTRATION FACT SHEET

Colt castrations are mainly carried out on the owner's premises and are routinely performed under general anaesthesia in this practice. We find this method of restraint is preferable but castrations can be performed under standing sedation, if requested, as long as the colt's temperament is suitable. Two vets will always be present at the castration, regardless of the method of restraint chosen. One vet will monitor the colt while the second vet performs the operation.

In certain cases, we may recommend that the colt is castrated at the Dick Vet Equine Hospital. These cases include "rigs" (colts with retained testicles), older colts/stallions (greater than 2-3 years, depending on their size), Standardbreds, donkeys, colts with a history of inguinal hernias or if the farm's facilities are inadequate (see below).

#### **Pre-operative instructions**

- Feed should be withheld from the night before (water is ok to be given right up until the operation).
- Do not bed your colt on straw or leave in field the night before as his stomach will be full.
- A large, well lit box / barn bedded with clean straw or a dry, safe paddock is necessary (a normal-sized horse stable is generally insufficient space).
- Ideally your colt should have completed his primary course of vaccinations at least 2 weeks prior to being castrated.

#### **The operation**

- All colts castrated on the owner's premises have an "open castration". This procedure involves making two incisions (one in each side of the scrotum). The testicles are exteriorised and an instrument called an emasculator (**Fig 1.**) is applied. This simultaneously removes the testicle and crushes the vessels in the cord to control bleeding. No stitches are placed either around the cord or in the skin.
- Rigs and stallions are castrated with different techniques which are generally performed at our hospital.

**Fig 1. The emasculators**



**Post-operative instructions**

- You will need to monitor your horse after his operation to ensure he is recovering well.
- Your gelding should ideally be stabled overnight after the operation but then be turned out as much as possible to minimise any swelling.
- The day after the operation, you can clean any dried blood off the scrotum and hind legs (if you can do so safely).
- The two skin incisions are left open to drain blood and tissue fluid. A steady dripping of blood can be expected for the first 24-48hrs. Please contact the vet if this becomes a continuous stream.
- Occasionally tissue will appear at the incision site. In most cases this will only be fat but it is important to contact the vet if you see anything protruding from the wounds.
- Contact the vet if the scrotal swelling appears excessive (melon-sized or larger) or if your gelding seems off colour (dull or inappetant).
- Contact the vet if you see a purulent (pus) discharge from the wounds.
- Your colt should not be turned out with mares for 12 weeks after he is gelded.