

Castration is a commonly carried out procedure in the UK. It has various advantages:

- Steers are safer to handle than bulls
- Avoids unwanted pregnancies/ accidental matings.

There are various commonly used methods, all with their own advantages and disadvantages:

- Rubber ring
- Burdizzos
- Surgical Castration ('Cutting')

Rubber Ring

A rubber ring is applied to the scrotum which cuts off the blood supply to the testicles and scrotum making them drop off.

Advantages:

- Quick and simple to perform.

Disadvantages:

- Should only be performed in calves under 7 days old.
- Animals may still be fertile if both testes are not captured.



Burdizzos

Burdizzos are used to crush the cord which leads to shrinking of the testes over the following weeks in cattle under 6 months of age.

Advantages:

- Reduced risk of infection compared to other methods.

Disadvantages:

- This is the method with the biggest risk of failure as testicles are not actually removed. It is important to check 4 weeks post procedure to ensure both testicles have atrophied completely.

Surgical Castration

The scrotum is cut to reveal the testicles which are removed, either by twisting and pulling or with the use of emasculators. Cleanliness of the procedure is very important. The scrotum should be disinfected before removal of the testicles and cattle must be housed in a clean environment. This should be done during the winter months to minimise the risk from flies.

Advantages:

- Most reliable method as both testicles are removed.

Disadvantages:

- Risk of haemorrhage, which can be fatal, particularly in older animals
- Higher risk of infection than other methods, due to an open wound.



In calves over 2 months old castration must be performed by a vet.