

Castrating lambs and buck kids

There are many ways to castrate a male lamb or goat kid. **Make sure the animal is protected against tetanus before you castrate him** (remember those vaccines you need to be sure he gets!) and castrate him at least a month before you plan to show or market him. Talk to your veterinarian about what sort of pain medication may or may not be recommended depending on the age of the animal. Here are two common methods of castration:

Use an elastator to place a heavy rubber ring on the scrotum (the loose sac of skin that holds both of his testicles) - Place a special rubber ring on the elastator. Push the testicles down into the scrotum. Pass the testicles and the scrotum (**but not the teats!**) through the rubber ring. Make sure both testicles are descended through the ring and then remove the ring from the elastator so that the ring squeezes down on the scrotum. The scrotum will “die” or gangrene from lack of blood and fall off in about 2 weeks. An elastator is relatively light weight and cheap and easy for a young person to use. It does have a higher risk of tetanus than the other methods. It should be done while the scrotum is still very small, i.e. from 2 days to 3 weeks of age depending on breed size. Make sure the kid or lamb has had a good feeding of colostrum prior to castrating a very young animal.

Use a burdizzo clamp to rupture the cords - Do one cord at a time. Push the cord to one side of the scrotum and clamp the burdizzo over it being careful to leave the teats above the crushing point. Close the burdizzo and count to 25. You should hear a crunch as you do it. Open the burdizzo and slide it down about a ½ inch to a different location on the same cord (i.e. move it farther away from the animal’s body). Shut the burdizzo on the cord again and count to 25. Now repeat the same procedure on the other side of the scrotum. Never apply the burdizzo over the entire scrotum to attempt to break both cords at one time. You do not want the entire scrotum to gangrene. Instead, crushing the two cords separately will cause the testicles to “atrophy” and gradually shrink and your wether will be left with a small empty scrotum sac. This method is the best one to use during fly season because it leaves no big open wound. Goats and lambs must be between 4 weeks to 6 months of age with 8 to 12 weeks being ideal. Burdizzos are very heavy (order the one for small ruminants rather than the one for calves) and may be difficult for a young person to use. It is not as reliable as the other methods because you cannot tell for sure if the cords have been crushed.