

Castrating basics

Castration is when the testicles are removed or destroyed.



A castrated sheep/goat is called a WETHER.

Approximately 75% of US sheep farms castrate their ram lambs. The need for castration varies and depends upon the management needs of the farm/ranch and the preference of the marketplace.

There are three primary ways to castrate ram lambs and buck kids: band, crush, or cut. All cause pain and pose some degree of risk, regardless of age. Tetanus protection is recommended.



When to do

When testicles are banded, this should be done early in life, 1-7 days of age and not later than 3 weeks. The emasculator or Burdizzo can be used to castrate older lambs/kids, up to 6 weeks of age. While surgical castration, with a knife or scalpel, is an age-old method of castration, it is less preferred since it causes the most pain (cortisol release) and poses the greatest risk, especially during fly season.



Early castration

Urinary calculi (UC: kidney stones) is a nutritional problem, not an early castration problem. With that said, many sheep/goats (more so goats and especially pet wethers) do not end up being properly fed, so late castration is sometimes done to help prevent UC. Late castrations (≥ 3 months) should be done by veterinarians.