



April 2026 Newsletter

DigiFarm

As part of our ongoing Royal College Veterinary Surgeons Practice Standards Scheme (PSS) we are required to have a prescription in place alongside a tailored treatment plan for each client when you collect drugs from any of our offices.

These prescriptions and treatment plans need to be completed on an annual basis for each species.

All clients that have an email address registered to their account with us will receive a copy of their prescription and treatment plan once completed, via our DigiFARM software. Any questions please contact Holly at Bridgwater on 01278663399.

Legislative Control of Castration

Castration of livestock within the UK is primarily governed by The Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) Regulations 2007, and The Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 is the most broad of the governing legislations and covers all vertebrate animals that are farmed, domesticated, or temporarily under the control of man, defining these as protected animals. Under the act it is an offence to allow a protected animal to unnecessarily suffer while under your care. The act specifies that an offence is committed by the person responsible for a protected animal if an animal suffers due to any action, or failure to act in a way that prevents suffering, committed by themselves, or by any person under their supervision. The act defines unnecessary suffering as any suffering that could have been avoided or reduced, is not proportional to the reason for suffering, or is not for a legitimate purpose, such as: benefitting the animal, protecting a person, property or another animal.

The Animal Welfare Act also specifies that an offence is committed when a person carries out, or allows someone else to carry out a prohibited procedure on a protected animal.

The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 prohibits performing any procedure which involves interference with the sensitive tissues or bone structure of the animal, however a specific exemption exists within the act under Schedule 3 and The Mutilations (Permitted Procedures) (England) Regulations 2007. This exemption permits castration of a bull that is under 2 months of age, or a ram under the age of 3 months, providing the procedure does not enter a body cavity. Under this exemption a person responsible for the livestock may perform elastic ring castration of bulls and rams up to 7 days old, or burdizzo castration on a bull that is younger than 2 months old, and a ram that is younger than 3 months old.

At this age there is no legal requirement for local anaesthetic to be used, however the Animal Welfare Act 2006 requires reduction of suffering whenever possible, so Metacam should be used. For bulls above 2 months of age and rams above 3 months of age, any castration must be performed by a Veterinary surgeon. At this age anaesthesia and analgesia (pain relief) are legal requirements, a veterinary surgeon may opt for surgical castration, burdizzos or emasculators.

Current Castration Requirements

Table showing the current legal requirements for castration of bulls and rams.

Method	Age at time of procedure	Who can perform this method?	Anaesthesia requirement?	Analgesia requirement?
Rubber ring castration	Up to 7 days old	Stockman over 18	No legal requirement	No requirement*
Clip castration	Up to 7 days old	Stockman over 18	No legal requirement	No requirement*
Burdizzo	Calves up to 2 months Rams up to 3 months	Trained Stockman	No legal requirement	No requirement*
	Calves over 2 months Rams over 3 months	Veterinarian	Required	Required
Surgical castration	Any age	Veterinarian	Required	Required

Although there is no specific legal requirements for analgesia, the Animal Welfare Act 2006 requires reduction of suffering whenever possible, which suggest analgesia should be provided whenever possible.

Ring castration can be used on a ram or bull up to 7 days old; should not be used if both testicles are not present and has a legal requirement for analgesia, but not anaesthesia.

Surgical castration can be performed at any age by a veterinary surgeon only, and requires anaesthesia and analgesia. Emasculators are a tool used for surgical castration by a veterinary surgeon, they crush the spermatic cord and blood supply to the testes, which can reduce the risk of bleeding post-operatively.

Burdizzos can be used by trained farmers up to 2 months of age in bulls and 3 months in rams with analgesia, but without a specific legal requirement for anaesthetic. They can also be used by a veterinary surgeon for older animals, however due to their low success (as low as 12%) a vet will usually opt for surgical castration. They have also been shown to cause more pain than ring castrations, although for a shorter period of time.

There is currently a consultation on changes to the rules for ringing and clipping—watch this space...

We want to wish all of our clients a Happy Easter from all of us at FarmVets SouthWest!

