

# Tail Docking: Lambs



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Please note:

- Each booklet illustrates one way to perform a skill and it is acknowledged that there are often other approaches. Before using the booklets students should check with their university or college whether the approach illustrated is acceptable in their context or whether an alternative method should be used.
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Year Group: BVSc1 +



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Equipment list:

Tail Docking: Lambs

Equipment for this station:

- Lamb – model (or cadaver for PM room practical only)
- Rubber rings
- Elastrator

Considerations for this station:

- Do not put a ring on any part of your own or anyone else's anatomy

Anyone working in the Clinical Skills Lab must read the 'CSL\_I01 Induction' and agree to abide by the 'CSL\_I00 House Rules' & 'CSL\_I02 Lab Area Rules'

Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.



# Clinical Skills: Tail Docking: Lambs

1



Select a rubber ring. Ensure the 4 pins of the elastrator are fully closed i.e. tight together (the handles of the elastrator will be fully open).

2



Roll the rubber ring over the 4 small pins of the elastrator until the ring is at the base of the pins (see photo inset top right).

3



Close the handles of the elastrator to open the pins to their full capacity to open/stretch the rubber ring.

4



With the free end of the pins pointed towards the lamb's body, pass the ring over the tip of the tail. Slide the elastrator pins (with the ring) cranially along the tail, keeping the ring fully open.

5

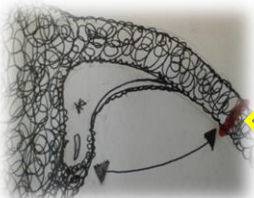


The length of tail from the lamb's body to the ring position should be enough to cover the anus of a male lamb and the anus and vulva of a female lamb. When the ring is in the correct position, release the elastrator handles so the ring and pins close around the tail.

6



Carefully ease/roll the rubber ring off the pins of the elastrator.



Check the position of the ring and length of tail are correct before releasing the ring.



# Clinical Skills: Tail Docking: Lambs



Close the handles of the elastrator to open the pins and slide the elastrator off the tail.



The ring is now in position. Check that the length of tail (from the lamb's body to the ring) is sufficient to cover the anus of a male lamb and the anus and vulva of a female lamb.

If the ring position was too far up the tail i.e. the position is incorrect, the ring will need to be removed.

Remove the ring using a curved scalpel blade →



or a pair of scissors.  
Then apply another ring in the correct position.





## Tail Docking: Lambs

- Consider carefully whether tail docking is necessary within a particular flock. Tail docking is carried out in situations where not doing so could lead to subsequent welfare problems because of dirty tails and potential fly strike.
- If tail docking and castration are undertaken, thought should be given to performing both procedures at the same time to minimise disruption and the potential for mis-mothering.
- Consideration should be given to the use of an analgesic as basic standard good practice e.g. a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (such as Metacam under the cascade) or a specialised ring applicator, combined with an injector that dispenses local anaesthetic.
- The Welfare of Livestock Regulations 1982 require sufficient tail to be retained to cover the anus in a male sheep and the vulva in a female sheep.

## Test Yourself

What analgesia could be given when tail docking?

What length of tail should be retained after docking?



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# Resetting the station: Tail Docking: Lambs

1. Use scissors to remove the rubber ring from around the tail of the model or the cadaver, if it is to be reused
2. Place all cut rubber rings in the bin
3. Put the elastrator back into the storage container

*Station ready for the next person:*



Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.



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I wish I'd known:

## Tail Docking: Lambs

- Have spare rubber rings to hand in case one pings off and is lost.
- Measure the tail length required before positioning and releasing the rubber ring.
- Have the lamb well restrained before starting.
- Make sure you have a curved blade (or scissors) to hand in case you need to remove an incorrectly placed ring.