

Overview

Crystals forming in the urine and blocking the bladder from emptying is a deadly and unfortunately common condition of our goat wethers. They are particularly prone due to their nutritional requirements.

Crystals in the urine will develop over time, but you will only notice when they lodge in the urethra, blocking the bladder from emptying. This is an emergency!

Causes

Nutritional

The true cause of crystals forming is usually dietary, usually by giving too many carbohydrates (e.g. pellets, bread and biscuits) or feeding excessive calcium or phosphorus (e.g. lucerne/alfalfa) to males. Some plants can also cause organic crystals, such as subterranean and red clover.

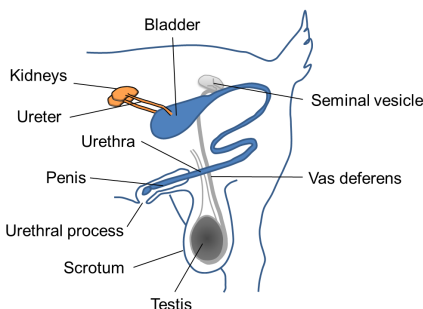
Goats require high levels of fibre to flush phosphorus from the body. This can be in the form of hay or tall, mature, high fibre grass.

Early-Age Castration

Once crystals are there, they are more likely to lodge in an animal castrated in the first 10 weeks of life. Castrating before 10 weeks old halts development of the urethra (the tube inside the penis that carries urine). The thin tube is more likely to block.

Urine volume and pH

Crystals are more likely to form when the pH is out of balance and will build up when the urine is concentrated. For example, we see more blocked bladders in summer when animals are dehydrated, as well as the middle of winter when goats refuse to drink the cold water.



GOATS: A GUIDE TO Bladder Crystals

Symptoms

You may notice him:

- Straining to urinate or dribbling urine
- Looking like they are straining to defecate
- A gritty substance on the hairs of the prepuce
- A hunched back and painful abdomen, reluctance to stand and walk
- A wide stance and distended belly
- Wagging of the tail

Without urgent help, he will die over the next day or so as toxins in the urine build up in the bloodstream. Eventually the bladder will burst.

Management/ Prevention/ Treatment

- If you intend your animals to live long, happy lives, they should be castrated at 10-12 weeks old. However at this age it will be significantly more painful and should be done **THROUGH A VET** with strong and ongoing pain relief.
- Reduce or eliminate concentrates for castrated male goats unless necessary.
- Avoid feeding lucerne/alfalfa forage or hay to early-castrated males.
- Always have clean, fresh water available, and make sure all goats have free access to fiber in the form of grass hay or pea straw.

When to call us

- **URGENTLY** if your male goat is showing any signs of difficulty urinating, this is an **EMERGENCY**.
- For castrations to be performed with pain relief and local anaesthetic
- To book a nutritional consultation and get you on the right foot.

**Updated Nov 25*